BLACK SHEPHERDS

A STUDY OF THE LEADING NEGRO CLERGYMEN IN NEW YORK CITY, 1900-1940

by

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Bayrd Still

PREFACE

In the midst of a constantly mounting crisis in race relations, it becomes increasingly evident that if this civilization is to survive, its heterogeneous components must find ways to know and understand each other. One reason for the lack of understanding between black and white America has been the void in which the history of black America has existed. Until the very recent past, our collective knowledge about black America has been shockingly limited.

One of the areas demanding study is the character and nature of leadership in black communities of the urbanized North during the period of rapid population increase in the twentieth century. This study attempts to delineate one group of local leaders in a limited area over a limited period of time--clergymen of the largest black Protestant churches in New York City between 1900 and 1940--and to study them in detail. Hopefully, it will at least serve to make better known a group of men who were intelligent, articulate and firmly committed to the struggle for human dignity and freedom.

One receives so much help in a study of this kind that only the most important sources can be mentioned. The staff of the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History were continuously helpful. The collection, which is of

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inestimable value to anyone interested in material pertaining to black America, has been maintained by a dedicated staff through many long years when black studies were not in vogue. That the present day interest in black studies can be sustained is partially because collections like the Schomburg have been professionally maintained, waiting the day to be extensively used.

I owe most to Professor Bayrd Still and Professor Vincent Carosso of the New York University History Department. Professor Still has guided me through this study from the beginning. His patience, understanding, insight and sound criticism made the task of the beginning historian a great deal easier. Professor Carosso has, since I began graduate school, always given me wise counsel and good friendship. It is with pride that I can call myself one of their students.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of a group of black clergymen who served some of the most influential black churches of New York City in the years from 1900 to 1940. Traditionally, clergymen of their own race have been known as the natural leaders of the black people of the United States. Writing in 1903, W. E. B. DuBois called the black preacher "the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil." DuBois pointed out that the clergyman played more than one important role in the black community; he was "a leader, a politician, an orator, a 'boss,' an intriguer, an idealist,...and ever, too, the centre of a group of men, now twenty, now a thousand in number."[1]

Most of the scholarly writing on Negro pastors, Negro religion and the Negro church has tended to focus on the South and upon an experience that was largely rural. Less is known about the urban black church and the role of the black clergyman in the urban community. In the popular mind the urban black clergyman is more often associated with emotional fundamentalist sermons and attention to the collection plate and to female church members, than with any honest moral concern to improve the lives of his communicants. This impression has resulted in part from the fact that the emphasis, even of the scholars who have studied Negro religion in the North, has been on the so-called storefront churches. The most familiar black religious personalities of the American city are cult leaders like Father Divine and Daddy Grace. This preoccupation with the storefront churches may account for Oscar Handlin's contention that creative leadership in the Negro community compared with other ethnic groups has been "tragically rare." Rather than leaders, Handlin feels, the black urban communities have spawned "interpreters,...characters who used their slightly larger knowledge of the wider society to mediate between it and the ethnic group, often in their own interests."[2]

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[1] W. E. B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk (Premier Books edition, New York, 1961), 190-191.

To judge from the New York City experience, a considerable number of black clergymen, associated with the large and influential churches, did not fit this description. Far from resembling the traditional image of the storefront pastor and the cult leader, far from being "characters" concerned only with their own interests, these men were, on the whole, serious and able leaders concerned with building a viable black community within the city and with improving the status of the black man within the larger American society. They saw the Christian Church as the one institution central to the needs and aspirations of all black people in the city, an institution whose guidance was necessary, not only with respect to the hereafter, but concerning all matters of everyday life. To them, the black church and the black community were inseparable, and they emerged as the natural leaders of the black community as it developed. One should not generalize from this study about the religious history of all of black New York or about the general character of all of the black pastors who served churches in the city. The study is confined to the examination of a limited group of men selected because of their dual role as important religious and important community leaders.

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[2] Oscar Handlin, The Newcomers: Negroes and Puerto Ricans in a Changing Metropolis (Anchor Books edition, New York, 1961), 112.

In selecting this limited group, an attempt was made to identify the black clergymen associated with leading black churches who had played a significant role in the black community in the years between 1900 and 1940. Clergymen identified with storefront churches were excluded as were those of the leading or "established" black churches, if there was no available evidence in the sources that their pastors provided significant leadership. The criteria adopted for identifying a leading or "established" black church were that it had a large membership, that it belonged to a national Protestant denomination and that it held services in its own church edifice. The Roman Catholic Church and its clergy do not figure in the story since, although there were Catholic parishes serving largely black congregations, there were no black priests.

As a result of these criteria of selection this study is based on the close examination of about 40 men who headed 16 of Manhattan's churches. To be sure, this group is small in number when it is remembered that between 1900 and 1940 there may have been more than 1,000 blacks in New York City who called themselves ministers and as many as 200 religious institutions. However, the clergymen discussed in this study headed churches that claimed in 1929 more than half of the total membership of all the black churches in Manhattan. Between 1900 and 1940, only one official survey of New York's black churches was made. Published in 1929, it reported 160 churches in Manhattan, with 62,633 members. The churches whose ministers are discussed in this study reported 33,515 members.[3] While the focus of the study is on the ministers in Manhattan's black community (primarily in Harlem, after 1915), a few ministers who served churches in Brooklyn have been included because their influence was strong enough to be significantly felt in the Harlem community.

Since the study focuses on the ministers and their role as leaders of the black community, the sources available in the churches themselves proved to be not particularly useful. It was the local black newspapers that became the single most important source, both for determining which ministers to study and for discovering what they said and did during this period. One paper, The New York Age, was published weekly throughout the period from 1900 to 1940, although no copies are available for the years between 1900 and 1905. The other, The Amsterdam News, popularly called the Amsterdam, began publication in 1909 and is still published today, but, except for a few scattered issues, there are no copies available before 1925.

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[3] Greater New York Federation of Churches, Negro Churches in Manhattan (New York, 1930) 11-20.

Both of these newspapers regularly devoted a good deal of space to church news usually written either by a member of the congregation or by the minister. These weekly items summarized the Sunday sermons, reported on church business meetings, gave an account of the social activities of the various church organizations and mentioned personal items about members of the congregation. At various times, clergymen wrote columns in the papers, and sermons were often printed in their entirety as a special feature. Further, since ministers were important figures in the community and churches important institutions, the ministers and the churches frequently were the subjects of or figured prominently in news stories. What a leading black minister said or did on important questions was always good copy for the black press. Through the editorial columns of the papers, the letters to the editor and even the news stories, the press and the community also commented, sometimes critically, on the churches and the ministers. The

Age and the *Amsterdam*, therefore, serve not only as a source for determining what the ministers were saying and doing but as a reflection of what the community thought about them.

There is no doubt that such newspapers were, at best, sometimes inaccurate and, at worst, downright biased. In a number of cases, ministers were misquoted, misinformation was reported and stories were garbled. Ministers not on good terms with the editors received either bad press coverage or no press coverage at all. There is a chance that some ministers who might have been included in this study were not because their activities were either ignored or underplayed by an unfriendly press. One saving factor about the bias of these two newspapers was the quite open admission of it. Neither the *Age* nor the *Amsterdam* hid its opposition to particular individuals in the editorial pages while making a pretense of objectivity on the news pages. There was an ingenuous slant to the news stories that brought controversies directly to the fore.

The central objectives of this study are twofold: first, to present a kind of group biography of some 40 significant black ministers serving churches in New York City between 1900 and 1940, and, second, to show the role these men played in the black community that was developing in Manhattan in these years. Since the community changed so greatly over these years, it has seemed appropriate to divide the study into four periods which can be differentiated on the basis of the background, the ideology and the actions of the ministers. The first period, 1900-1915, was a time when the black community was located outside of Harlem, in the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill districts, and was just beginning to experience the influx of newcomers from the South. This first period sets the stage for the movement to Harlem and introduces a number of pastors who remain as central figures throughout. The second period, 1910-1920, concerns the movement of the black community to Harlem, a movement that saw a large proportion of the black population of Manhattan in addition to a large number of newcomers from the South and West Indies take up residence in the area north of One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street. The third period, the 1920's, was distinguished for the prevailing concern to achieve the consolidation and improvement of the black community in Harlem, a community that seemed to share the nation's hope and optimism for the future. Finally, there is the period of the 1930's, which was characterized by the striking contrast in attitude to the optimism of the 1920's. Reacting to the hardships of the Depression, Harlem blacks were much more militant in their demands for improvement in conditions and much more willing to reject traditional ways of thinking and acting.

The war effectively closed this period by solving the unemployment problem and by giving many blacks a strong reason to identify again with the philosophy and goals of the American society as a whole.

In treating each period, the findings have been presented in two parts conforming to the two general objectives of the study. In the first part, the background of the various ministers and the nature of their theological and ideological positions are described, in an attempt to present them as individuals--their place of birth, their educational background, their professional careers before they assumed their New York positions and their basic beliefs. The first part also describes the churches these ministers served--their location, size and finances and the make-up of their congregations. The second part of the discussion of each period describes the community involvement of the ministers and the churches they led. This material is organ~~ize~~d thematically rather than by individual pastor or church, and deals with these leaders' involvement in business, in politics, in social welfare and in civil rights.

Admittedly this study deals with the ideas and actions of a black elite rather than of the whole black community. The ministers studied were members of an established group at the top of the black community; the churches they led were institutions that appealed to that elite; and the main sources used, the black newspapers, certainly reflected a point of view closer to the elite than to the mass. Yet, churches by their very definition, and black churches in particular, were forced to relate to the entire community and to voice the aspirations and ideals of all the people. One of the central institutional roles of the "established" black churches studied here was to bridge the gap between the black elite and the black masses. The ministers of these churches made an attempt to relate to the struggling masses and to persuade their elite congregations of the need to understand the Christian message that all men were brothers. The "established" black church attempted to provide a struggling and desperately poor urban community with the beginnings of social cohesiveness and collective self-discipline. In doing so, these black pastors were filling in this urban community a role remarkably similar to the one DuBois had attributed to rural black pastors.

CHAPTER I

PRE-HARLEM:
THE LEADING CLERGYMEN AND THEIR CHURCHES, 1900-1915

In 1900, the black population of Manhattan was located primarily in the Tenderloin district west of Eighth Avenue between Twentieth Street and Fifty-third Street and in the San Juan Hill district west of Tenth Avenue between Sixtieth Street and Sixty-fourth Street. Crowded into some of the worst tenements of New York City, in areas known for their high incidence of prostitution, gambling, thievery and murder and meeting discrimination and bigotry whenever searching for jobs, housing, food, entertainment or aid from public authorities, Manhattan's blacks were in need of strong institutions upon which to build a viable community. Given the continued increase in migration from the South and the movement of the community's geographical base toward Harlem, these first years of the twentieth century were difficult ones for those interested in establishing a community base. But there were beginnings, and some of the important beginnings were made by men who drew upon the long established strength of the Negro church.[1]

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[1] The best general descriptions of black New York during the early part of the twentieth century can be found in Seth Scheiner, Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro in New York City, 1865-1920 (New York, 1965); Gilbert Osofsky, Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto: Negro New York, 1890-1930 (New York, 1966), 3-104; and Roi Ottley and William Weatherby, eds., The Negro in New York: An Informal Social History (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., 1967), 145-176. Manhattan's Negro population in 1900 was 36,246 and in 1910 had reached 60,534. United States Census Office, Twelfth Census, 1900: Population (Washington, 1901), I, 631; United States Census Office, Thirteenth Census, 1910: Population (Washington, 1913), I, 178.

By 1900, there were eight well-established black Protestant churches in Manhattan. Each, with the exception of the two most recently established, claimed a membership approaching or exceeding 1,000. There was one important Roman Catholic Church--St. Benedict the Moor--which served blacks and there were many other smaller Protestant churches. It is impossible to ascertain exactly how many black Protestant churches there were in 1900. Scheiner says there were 13 in Manhattan and Brooklyn in 1865 and that this number increased by "more than threefold" by 1900. A survey of the Age in 1905 and 1906 yielded names of 24 black Protestant churches in Manhattan.[2]

Ministers and communicants of the established churches could point to a long history of separate and successful black congregations in New York City. The first such congregation had its beginnings in 1796 when black members of the John Street Methodist Church held separate services of their own, "where they might have an opportunity to exercise their spiritual gifts among themselves, and thereby be more useful to one another." Led by Peter Williams, a successful tobacconist and ex-slave who had been purchased from his Tory master by the John Street

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[2] Scheiner, 87-88. It should also be noted here that the membership figures are estimates, at best. Until the official survey of 1929, the figures are based on a combination of the guesses of observers and the claims of ministers.

Church during the Revolution and who in turn had purchased his own freedom from the church in 1785, the group broke permanently with the white organization. In 1800, a separate edifice was erected on Church Street, and, in 1801, the congregation procured a separate charter from the Methodist Episcopal Church, naming the church the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E.Z.). In 1821, the church established itself as a completely separate denomination with its own ecclesiastical hierarchy. Missionaries were dispatched to begin new congregations elsewhere in the United States. The New York church then became known as Mother Zion. By 1890, the A.M.E.Z. Church claimed 349,000 members in congregations throughout the United States. Mother Zion moved northward from its original location to West Tenth and Bleecker streets in the mid-nineteenth century and then to West Eighty-ninth Street in 1904. Membership exceeded 1,000 by the turn of the century.[3]

Because of its stature as the first separate black church, Mother Zion enjoyed throughout the nineteenth century the reputation of being a "prestige" church. This reputation was often enhanced by the assignment of excellent pastors to its pulpit. The best known of Mother Zion clergymen, Alexander Walters, had left its pulpit in 1892 to become an A.M.E.Z. bishop. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Bishop Walters became a national spokesman for black people and was after 1905 one of the members of the group of black leaders that opposed Booker T. Washington. Walters' life, as he told it in his autobiography, was a typical one for black leaders who emerged between the Civil War and World War 1. Born a slave in Kentucky in 1858, a member of a family that included seven other children, he grasped at the opportunity for education, walking five miles a day to attend elementary school. Between the country school and private tutoring from a local minister impressed with his intelligence, Walters accumulated the equivalent of about eight years of schooling before he was licensed to preach at the age of 18. His rise through the A.M.E.Z. ranks was remarkable. In 1877, he was preaching in small towns of Kentucky; 11 years later, after holding posts in Louisville, Knoxville and San Francisco, he was pastor of the Mother Church in New York City. In 1892, he was elected bishop, at 34 the youngest in the history of the denomination.[4]

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[3] Carter G. Woodson, The History of the Negro Church (2nd edition, Washington, 1921), 78-85; Ottley and Weatherby, 53-55; J. W. Hood, One Hundred Years of the A.M.E. Zion Church (no place, 1895), 56-129; Guion G. Johnson and Guy B. Johnson with the assistance of Edward N. Palmer, "The Church and the Race Problem in the United States," Research Memorandum prepared for the Carnegie-Myrdal Study of the Negro in America (Schomburg Collection), 269; The New York Age (hereafter cited as Age), May 29, 1913.

As a bishop, Walters spent most of his time working for national organizations seeking to improve the life of black people in the United States. He was one of the leaders in the formation of the Afro-American League in 1890 and its successor, the Afro-American Council in 1898, serving the latter as president. Both of these organizations were created to protest such outrages as lynching, the convict lease system, segregation and prevention of voting, and to promote programs of self-help. The Afro-American Council was at first under the control of Booker T. Washington and emphasized the self-help program, but with pressure from the Niagara Movement, a forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P.), Washington's control was dislodged after 1906. Walters maintained a leading position in the Council both during and after Washington's control. After 1906, he had, however, clearly moved away from his tenuous relationship with Washington and into the camp of the opposition. He was one of the organizers of the N.A.A.C.P. and became the leading spokesman for the black radicals who supported the Democratic Party in the elections of 1908 and 1912. Though he was not an active minister after 1892, Bishop Walters maintained his residence in Manhattan, and his presence in the midst of New York's religious scene certainly influenced its political tone and lent ecclesiastical prestige to the radical position.[5]

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[4] Alexander Walters, My Life and Work (New York, 1917), 19-88; August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington (Ann Arbor Books edition, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1966), 172; Richard Bardolph, The Negro Vanguard (Vintage Books edition, New York, 1961), 141, 157.

After Walters left to become a bishop, Mother Zion suffered from the lack of dynamic leadership in its pulpit. No less than six separate pastors served the church between 1892 and 1913, none of them long enough to establish firm control or to exercise much influence on the larger black community. Part of the reason for the rapid turnover was due to the A.M.E.Z. policy which dictated that no minister was to serve the same congregation for more than six consecutive years. Mother Zion was led by P. R. Cutyner from 1900 to 1904 and by J. H. McMullen from 1904 to 1909. McMullen presided over the move to West Eighty-ninth Street and over the investment of church funds in a tenement house on Grove Street. In 1909, he requested a transfer to a mission in Harlem and was followed at Mother Zion by Richard M. Bolden.[6]

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[5] Walters, 89-140, 177-198; Meier, 171-189; Rufus E. Clement, "Profile of Alexander Walters," Phylon, VII (1st Quarter, 1946), 16.

[6] *Age*, February 9, 1905, August 12, 1909, May 29, 1913.

The second separate New York congregation began in 1809 when 16 members of the First Baptist Church were granted permission to leave and form the Abyssinian Baptist Church under the leadership of Thomas Paul of Boston. With the help of their white brethren, they purchased the property of the Ebenezer Baptist Church on Anthony Street. Abyssinian also followed the black migration uptown, moving to a location on Waverly Place in Greenwich Village in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1902, Charles S. Morris was named pastor and Abyssinian moved uptown to an edifice on Fortieth Street west of Eighth Avenue. Here began a rapid increase in membership that by the 1930's made Abyssinian the largest Protestant congregation in the United States.[7]

Reverend Morris, as did so many Baptist preachers of this time and place, combined a traditional fundamentalist theology with a more modern and urban social gospel. He advocated a kind of institutional church which would include a number of activities to provide alternatives to the dissolute life of the street. He was credited with organizing at Abyssinian a children's church, a debating society, a kindergarten, a benevolent society and a group of trained nurses to visit the sick. He was an active crusader against prostitution which was so blatant in the area in which his church was located. His most famous sermon, which he delivered a number of times, was entitled, "The Terrible Tenderloin." In it he described how the vice rings of the area ruined the lives of thousands of young men and women every year. Reverend Morris also had a series of sermons on the "live questions of the day," which included, "The Curse of Rum," "The Harm of Gambling," "Ought Christians Attend the Theatre?" and "Is Dancing a Sin?"[8]

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[7] Woodson, 89-90; Ottley and Weatherby, 55; Abyssinian Baptist Church, The Ninety-Fourth Anniversary (no imprint), 2; Age, April 17, 1913; The New York Amsterdam News (hereafter cited as Amsterdam), July 29, 1931.

Much controversy developed over Morris in early 1908, and this led to his resignation later that year. The church had contracted a large debt upon its move uptown in 1902, and some in the congregation were disturbed at Reverend Morris's failure to reduce it significantly. Further, in 1907, Morris, it was reported, had become interested in a "Holiness" sect during a trip to the West and, on his return to Abyssinian,had attempted to convert members of the church to the new creed. Achieving no success, he resigned, but in the next months his associate pastor, William S. Holder, preached several sermons denouncing the "Gift of Tongues Sect with its holiness delusions and advocates" and "evangelist Witches" who were speaking against educated ministers and against the Young Men's Christian Association, (Y.M.C.A.) for "having games within its walls." Holder soon resigned, and Abyssinian was left to traveling evangelists and trial preachers for the rest of the year.[9]

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[8] Age, March 29. 1906, July 5, 1906, December 12, 1907, February 13, 1908. There is no information available on the background of Reverend Morris before he came to New York.

The incidents indicated that there was a real split within the congregation between those who favored a more emotional "down-home" religion and those who preferred more refined services. The rapid growth of the church and its move to the midst of the black Tenderloin heightened this division since a good number of the new members were recent migrants to the city and contrasted with the older members, described once by Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., as "divine aristocrats," with "their high lace collars kept correctly stiff with whale bone, their black rustling taffeta and cloth top, high-buttoned shoes." The future growth and power of the church would depend on how well it could serve the needs of the growing number of black masses and yet retain its elite base. The great success of Reverend A. Clayton Powell, who came to Abyssinian in December of 1908, was due in no small part to his ability to unite these diverse elements of the church into a positive dynamic force in New York's black community.[10]

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[9] Ibid., February 27, 1908, March 5, 1908, May 7, 1908, May 21, 1908.

[10] [ ] Tarry, "Abyssinian Baptist Church," manuscript

Reverend Powell was by no means a neophyte in 1908. At 43 years of age, he had had 16 years of preaching experience mostly at New Haven's Immanuel Baptist Church. His life, like that of so many other black leaders of this time, resembled an Horatio Alger story. Born in 1865, in a one-room sharecropper's cabin in Virginia housing nine members of his family, Powell lived the earliest years of his life in the most meager of circumstances. He never spoke of his natural father, only of his mother's husband who had a "P" branded on his back while a slave. His maternal grandmother was a Choctaw Indian and his maternal grandfather a German. At seven, he began school, making the five-mile trip on foot. He was befriended by the white schoolmaster who was impressed by the intelligence and determination of the young child. Early in his schooling, his stepfather gave him a Bible and indicated that if he could learn enough to read the holy book to him the schooling would be worth the time lost in the fields.[11]

In 1875, the family moved to West Virginia where the

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research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--The Church in New York" (Schomburg Collection); A. Clayton Powell, Against the Tide: An Autobiography (New York, 1938), 49-50, 53-55; Claude Lewis, Adam Clayton Powell (Greenwich, Conn., 1963), 15.

[11] Powell, Against the Tide, 6-11; Ben A. Richardson, Great American Negroes (New York, 1956), 197-210.

young Powell attended school two more years and then quit to work in the mines. Eventually, he made his way to Rendville, Ohio, where he worked in the mines during the day and gambled away his earnings at night. It was in Rendville, in 1885, that the young Powell was converted to Christianity in the midst of a week-long revival that cleared the town of "every saloon and gambling house." He returned to school as a result of his conversion and was soon so respected in Rendville that he was made a deputy marshall. In 1887, Powell went to Washington, D.C., hoping to attend Wayland Seminary, but needing a job to pay his way through. Refusing an offer of a scholarship by a white man because he wanted to earn his own way, he asked the president of the school to give him the job of cleaning out the privies. Astonished at the young man's determination, the president saw to it that Powell got the job of headwaiter in the college dining room.

Upon graduation from Wayland and ordination in 1892, the newly married Powell assumed the pastorate of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Philadelphia. The pastoral salary was so meager that he spent his summer vacation working as a waiter in Atlantic City. However, in 1893, he was called to Immanuel in New Haven, a post that he filled until his call to New York. At Immanuel, Powell proved his organizational ability as well as his evangelical popularity as he molded a struggling church into the most important in New

Haven, with a new building free of debt. He was also active in attempting to improve relations between the black and white communities, beginning a pulpit exchange program with white ministers. He found time as well to study for a year at Yale Divinity School. By 1908, the aggressive and talented minister was anxious for more opportunity and more responsibility. Thus, he eagerly responded to the chance to go to New York to reorganize and reunite the wrangling congregation at Abyssinian.[12]

Under A. Clayton Powell's dynamic leadership, Abyssinian soon began to gain membership rapidly, to achieve financial prosperity and to exert a force for stability upon the black population. A key element in Powell's success was his militant stand for race pride and race unity. Powell went farther than any other minister in this early period toward preaching a kind of "black is good" philosophy which rejected the thinking that black Americans should ape the dominant white society in order to be accepted into full equality. Powell contended that not only was there much that was wrong with the white civilization but that black civilization had something positive to contribute to the American experience. "American religion is an abomination in God's eye," he said in a sermon in 1914. It "shuts boys and girls up in the factories and grinds all of the red corpuscles out of their blood....It disenfranchises, segregates and Jim Crows ten million American citizens; shoots, hangs and burns defenseless men and women....If the colored race copies American religion it shall die."[13]

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[12] Powell, Against the Tide, 11-47; Age, December 3, 1908.

Powell advocated black self-help, especially economic self-help, and argued that financial success through legitimate business was the surest way to race pride and eventual equality. In 1915, he wrote in the Colored American Review:

> A right not denied my race is the right to save money, buy property and engage in business. With all the unjust, un-American, un-Christian enactments against my people, I do not know a single State that has any law against a colored man saving his money, buying a home and conducting a decent business. The colored minister has not placed enough emphasis upon the gospel of economy.... Somehow or other we have the idea that wealth is not compatible with Christianity; thet just as soon as a colored man begins to prosper he divorces himself from the church and Christ. That Lazarus story has been worked to death. Christ never intended to teach by that parable that every man who has money must of necessity go to hell, and that every fellow who lies around with sores on him, begging crumbs, is going to Heaven. I am glad there was but one Lazarus in the New Testament. I had rather preach to a hundred prosperous business men than to a thousand men of the Lazarus stamp. Wealth is an adjunct to Christianity. All things being equal, it makes a man more manly.

Black-owned business, in Powell's opinion, would have the "double duty" effect of enriching the black businessmen as well as providing more employment for the black workers.

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[13] Age, May 14, 1914.

"The race problem will never be solved as long as Negroes talk race loyalty and race rights and then spend their money with white business and professional men." Reverend Powell himself was a successful businessman and amassed a respectable fortune from Harlem real estate speculation, lecture tours and evangelistic campaigns.[14]

Given his emphasis on race pride, hard work and frugal habits, Powell's rather traditional fundamentalist opposition to smoking, drinking, card playing, motion pictures and dancing can be better understood. He felt that at best these were luxuries that black people could not afford and at worst another example of copying the decadence of white men who had "reached the apex of a sinful civilization... intoxicated with their own material accomplishments." Such folly could only sap the strength of black people who needed all the power they could muster for the struggle toward equality. "No people have had greater opportunities stretching before them than we have," Reverend Powell told his congregation in 1910, "and for God's sake, let us not commit racial suicide on the very threshold of these unspeakable opportunities."[15]

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[14] Colored American Review, I (October 1, 1915), 4; Age, January 8, 1914; Irwin Ross, Robert G. Spivack and David Gelman, "Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.--A Post Portrait," The New York Post (hereafter cited as Post), March 21, 1956; Powell, Against the Tide, 39, 138.

[15] Age, May 17, 1910, October 31, 1912.

Powell also united the congregation at Abyssinian behind him by attending to the organizational and administrative details that keep a large institution running smoothly. He made it clear the first Sunday in the new pulpit that he did not intend to adhere to the Negro tradition of starting services a half hour or more after the scheduled time. He would begin services on time whether anyone was in the sanctuary or not. He set out to put in order the financial affairs of the debt-ridden church by installing a modern accounting system open to audit. He looked to the best informed laymen in the congregation for expert advice and appointed them to positions of importance within the church. By the second decade of the century, Abyssinian was a model of organizational efficiency and financial solvency. It remained so even through the Depression. This organizational ability, which has often been overlooked in assessments of pastors, was one of Powell's great strengths for it enabled him to avoid the criticism and dissension that were so often the fruits of poor organization.[16]

Reverend Powell also felt that the modern twentieth-century church was obliged to act in a meaningful and practical way in the everyday lives of its communicants. He was an early and vigorous exponent of the social gospel. In a sermon in 1906, he said:

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[16] Powell, Against the Tide, 53-55; Age, April 15, 1909, April 17, 1913.

> The church will never draw and bind the masses to her communion by essays on faith, but by showing her faith by her works....The church has not discharged its obligations when it has hired a man to stand up twice one day in seven to explain its creeds and doctrines and piously to ram the Bible down the throats of the people. It must go into the highways and hedges during the week, caring for the sick, the wounded, the distressed and all that are needy.[17]

His church was active in developing recreational and relief activities for its members and for the community. The pastor had hardly settled into his new position when, in 1909, he began a campaign against the prostitution which was so appalling in the Tenderloin and especially in the block where his church and his private apartment were located. An early member of both the N.A.A.C.P. and the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes (Urban League), Powell, from his first sermon in 1908 to his retirement from the active pastorate in 1937, remained one of the most important leaders in the New York City black community. He firmly believed that as a Christian minister he had to help improve all aspects of life for black people in New York City. What A. Clayton Powell said and did always carried importance because of the strength of the man and the strength of the church which he had united behind him.[18]

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[17] A. Clayton Powell, "The Significance of the Hour," _Palestine, and Saints in Caesar's Household_ (New York, 1939), 98, 101-102.

In 1818, the Protestant Episcopal Church allowed the formation of a separate black congregation which was incorporated in 1820 as St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church and located on Centre Street. Peter Williams, Jr., the son of the founder of Mother Zion and the first Negro to be ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church, became the rector. By 1900, St. Philip's was generally recognized as the wealthiest and most exclusive black church in New York City. Its membership by 1911 reached 1,100. Located on West Twenty-fifth Street since moving from Mulberry Street in 1889, St. Philip's also owned a number of lots on West Thirtieth Street, land that rapidly appreciated in value upon the erection of Penn Station.[19]

Beginning in 1886, the rector of St. Philip's was Hutchens C. Bishop. Bishop was born in Baltimore in 1859, the son of free parents who were active in the establishment of Baltimore's first separate black Episcopal church. His background when compared to other ministers of this time was somewhat atypical. He was not born in the deep South; he came from an urban environment; he and his parents were free; and he attended a predominantly white school, being the first Negro to be admitted and graduated from General Theological Seminary. Further, Reverend Bishop could pass for white and did so on a number of occasions. Bishop was made rector of St. Philip's after only a few years experience in Charleston, South Carolina. So well suited to St. Philip's was he that he remained there until succeeded by his son in 1933.[20]

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[18] Powell, *Against the Tide*, 49-59; *Age*, April 17, 1913; Frank Lane Mather, ed., *Who's Who of the Colored Race: A General Bibliographical Dictionary of Men and Women of African Descent* (Chicago, 1915), 222; Clement Richardson, ed., *National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race* (Montgomery, Ala., 1919), 227.

[19] Woodson, 94-96; Ottley and Weatherby, 55, 94-95; George F. Bragg, *History of the Afro-American Group of the Episcopal Church* (Baltimore, 1922), 81-89; *The Crisis*, II (July, 1911), 102; Waring Cuney, "Interview with Reverend Shelton Bishop," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--The Church in New York" (Schomburg Collection); *Age*, December 9, 1909, March 30, 1911, December 20, 1919.

Hutchens Bishop favored institutional church ideas and called on his church to increase its activities on behalf of a community lacking in the basic needs of life. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, St. Philip's had several recreational clubs for young people, a gymnasium and playground with a full complement of activities, a Big Brother program, a relief program and a kind of model tenement program. Bishop was one of the founders of the Urban League and was chosen as one of N.A.A.C.P.'s "Men of the Month" in July, 1911. The citation emphasized the growth of the service organizations of St. Philip's since Bishop had taken over. In 1913, he was elected to the Board of Directors of the N.A.A.C.P.[21]

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[20] Bragg, 88; Cuney, "Interview"; Age, May 29, 1937; The New York Times, August 25, 1962.

[21] Richardson, National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race,

In the early twentieth century, Hutchens Bishop's position was akin to that of other important Negro Episcopalian clerics in other cities. Men like Alexander Crummell, George F. Bragg and Francis J. Grimké who were leaders of elite churches, as August Meier has pointed out, tended to be early supporters of the Niagara Movement and the N.A.A.C.P., and to be less than enthusiastic about Booker T. Washington's solutions, especially when applied to Northern cities. Bishop saw clearly the poverty and discrimination around him and felt the duty not only to speak against it but to take action through his church and through organizations like the N.A.A.C.P. and the Urban League. Reverend Bishop was also an able administrator and financial manager. He was responsible for moving the church uptown, first to Twenty-fifth Street, in 1889, and later to Harlem, in 1911. He sold the valuable land near Penn Station and invested the funds in Harlem apartment houses, an investment that afforded an income large enough to enable St. Philip's to supply the newly developing Harlem community with an abundance of social services. He was managing by the time of the First World War an annual budget exceeding $100,000. Bishop was highly respected by

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222; Frances Blascoer, Colored School Children in New York (New York, 1915), 56-58; The Crisis, II (July, 1911), 102; ibid., V (March, 1913), 243.

his fellow ministers and other leaders of New York's black community. His fellow pastor, George Frazier Miller, rector of St. Augustine's Protestant Episcopal Church in Brooklyn, said in 1915 that Reverend Bishop's "managerial skill and wisdom in dealing with men and matters puts him naturally in that leadership that makes his personality felt and his counsel sought at those times when action and direction are the demands of the hour."[22]

Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.) was founded by dissident members of Mother Zion in 1819. Located in a building on Mott Street, the new congregation soon became part of the rapidly expanding A.M.E. denomination. The A.M.E. Church, which was first established in Philadelphia in 1794 and which by 1890 claimed a membership throughout the United States of 452,000, earned a reputation in the nineteenth century as a vigorous advocate of equality for the black man in America. Bethel in New York served as a center for the anti-slavery movement and after the Civil War provided a platform for equalitarianism. For most of the nineteenth century the church was located in Greenwich Village on Sullivan Street. In 1895, the congregation moved to West Twenty-fifth Street.[23]

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[22] Meier, 222-223; George Frazier Miller, "The Colored Ministry of New York," in New York State Commission, National Negro Exposition, Statistics of the New York Negro (New York, 1915), unpaged; Age, July 16, 1921, May 29, 1937.

Bethel had distinguished leadership in the 1880's from W. B. Derrick who was elected an A.M.E. bishop in 1896. Derrick was born in the British West Indies in 1843. His father, who was a planter, sent him to England for his secondary education. When the Civil War began, he returned to the New World and enlisted in the United States Navy. After the war, he began preaching as an A.M.E. itinerant and became active in Virginia politics but left the state once the Republicans lost power. He came to New York in 1879, served for several years as Bethel's pastor and was, in 1888, elected missionary secretary of the A.M.E. Church, establishing his office in New York City.[24]

Ideologically, Derrick fell into the mainstream of Negro thought at the turn of the century. Although not close to Washington personally, he emphasized the self-help philosophy--hard work, education, temperance and obedience to the laws of the land. "Buy less and produce more,"

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[23] Woodson, 72-83; A.M.E. Church Review, XLIII (April, 1927), 271-272; Age, April 9, 1908, December 9, 1909, May 8, 1913, May 21, 1914.

[24] Woodson, 231-232; Richard R. Wright and John Hawkins, eds., Centennial Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Philadelphia, 1916), 83; Scheiner, 177, 184-185; William N. Hartshorn, ed., An Era of Progress and Promise, 1865-1910: The Religious, Moral and Educational Development of the American Negro since His Emancipation (Boston, 1910), 385; Age, April 24, 1913.

Derrick advised his followers. He counselled Negroes in 1900 not to migrate north, for they were the "bone and sinew of the South." "The Negro of the South today is keeping pace....There are 170-odd institutions of learning supported by the State, by the philanthropists of the North, and by himself." Like many Northern moderates, however, Derrick at other times spoke out forcefully against racial oppression. Speaking before the New York Conference of the A.M.E. Church in 1904 on the recent wave of race riots, he said:

> I do not advocate retaliation, but we should stand up manfully and protest, and appeal to the few friends that we have left to see to it that we get justice, since we are here. When we talk of asserting our manhood rights there are certain sycophants and apologists who tell us to "shoo," but I am one of those who will not "shoo." I was a man before I was a preacher; I was a man before I was a bishop; and I am a man now, and shall contend for the manhood rights of my people, and if I am killed they shall kill a man....
>
> I will not say retaliate, for that will be telling you to be brutes and I would be promoting the brutality of the white man. But we cannot win by preaching too much peace and brotherly love, for as soon as the negro shows too much of this spirit the white man says he is a coward. The manly man strikes back.
>
> We demand manhood rights, not black manhood rights nor white manhood rights. I do not ask for social equality or amalgamation, but for our own choice of selection as to taste and fitness. I want everything that every other man may have. But the white man cannot be just to us because he has in him none of the spirit of Christ.[25]

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[25] The Christian Recorder, May 30, 1901; Testimony of W. B. Derrick in United States Industrial Commission, Reports of the Industrial Commission on Immigration and on Education, Vol. XV (Washington, 1901), 155; unidentified newspaper clipping, in W. B. Derrick Pamphlet File (Schomburg Collection).

Politically, Bishop Derrick remained a loyal Republican from the Civil War until his death in 1913. He was convinced that the Negro had no place in a party composed of Southern racists, who continued to keep blacks poor and ignorant, and Northern political bosses, who thrived on the continuation of vice, intemperance and lawlessness in the urban slums. He constantly preached the virtue of Republican politics and worked as an active party member. The example that Derrick set in his preeminent position certainly did nothing to deter New York ministers from using their pulpits to exert a force in politics.[26]

After Derrick left Bethel, the church suffered under mediocre leadership. From 1901 until 1907, Thomas Wellington Henderson was the pastor of Bethel. Like so many other A.M.E. ministers, Reverend Henderson had headed a number of churches in different parts of the United States and seemed preoccupied during his years at Bethel with his chances of being elected to a bishopric. Henderson was born in 1845 in Greensboro, North Carolina. His parents owned and operated a bakery in Greensboro and earned enough to send their son to Oberlin College at the age of 14. He spent the next six years there and, in 1866, was assigned to the pastorate of an A.M.E. church in Lawrence, Kansas. He spent 11 years in Lawrence busy not only with his church work but with editing and publishing a newspaper and working in politics. Before he left,he had served as the chaplain of the Kansas House of Representatives, as a member of the Board of Education in Lawrence and was even seriously considered as a candidate for lieutenant governor. The Kansas years seemed to have been the high point in Henderson's career, however, for after this he was moved with great frequency by his church from city to city. Before reaching New York, he served in St. Louis, Chicago, Kansas City, Indianapolis and Philadelphia, staying about four years in each church. In 1880, Henderson began The Christian Recorder, a weekly newspaper covering A.M.E. news and opinion. The paper achieved national circulation and prominence until it was discontinued in 1916.[27]

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[26] Scheiner, 195; Age, May 14, 1908, April 24, 1913.

While in New York, Henderson worked with the Citizens' Protective League, formed after the 1905 riot to protect legal rights of blacks and to protest conditions, the Committee for the Prevention of Tubercolosis, a forerunner of the Urban League, and the Afro-American Council. He spoke several times about the necessity of being politically active and decried the fact that blacks in New York had so few municipal jobs. He once urged the formation of a "Colored Man's Municipal Association" to further political activity and its accompanying rewards. He criticized the environemnt in which his church was supposed to further the Christian spirit and spoke of the necessity of severe punishment for those who frequented the "dens of evil" in the neighborhood. But his main interest seemed to be in strengthening his base at Bethel by increasing the membership, reducing the debt and improving the physical property. By his own admission, he was most interested in being elected a bishop at the Quadrennial Conference in 1908, and he hoped that the Conference would meet at Bethel to increase the possibilities of his election. However, he was transferred to Boston in 1907 and the bishopric never materialized. He died in 1915.[28]

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[27] Hartshorn, 440; The Christian Recorder, April 2, 1908; Wright and Hawkins, 112; Age, March 21, 1907.

The exchange that sent Henderson to Boston's Charles Street A.M.E. Church brought to Bethel the controversial and energetic Reverdy Ransom. A nationally known radical, Ransom quickly became one of black New York's leading spokesmen on local as well as on national matters. He provided Bethel with a leadership which revived and enlarged the congregation. Unfortunately, Ransom's influence on New York did not last very long for he left the Bethel pastorate in 1912 to become editor of the A.M.E. Church Review.

Reverdy Ransom's life story was another one that saw a steady climb from obscure and humble origins. Born in a log cabin in Flushing, Ohio, in 1861, Ransom never knew his father. His mother worked as a domestic, and his early years were spent largely with his grandparents. Later he lived with his mother in the home of her white employers. The key element in his early life was, according to Ransom, the fierce determination of his mother to provide him with an opportunity to make something of himself. Observing the manners and customs of her employers as well as their success, Harriet Ransom determined to provide her son with an education good enough to assure his success. At one point she mortgaged the family home and at another she sold the family cow to provide funds to send Reverdy to college.

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[28] The Christian Recorder, June 8, 1905; Age, August 31, 1905, September 21, 1905, May 3, 1906, March 21, 1907.

Young Ransom was also impressed with the value of education and worked hard at all kinds of odd jobs to earn money for his future education. In 1881, after several years of work on his own and the mortgaging of the house, Ransom entered Wilberforce College. While at Wilberforce, Ransom won a scholarship to attend Oberlin College, the nineteenth-century outpost of liberalism on the race question. In his first year there, Ransom so vigorously protested a policy which racially segregated the women's dining hall at Oberlin that he lost his scholarship. Returning to Wilberforce where he felt the lessons of racial equality were not only taught but practiced, he and his mother redoubled their efforts to finish his education. The years at Wilberforce greatly influenced Ransom. It was here that he had his conversion experience and decided upon the ministry as his vocation and here that his ideas about racial equality and the need to insist upon it as uncompromisingly as possible were nurtured.[29]

Reverdy Ransom was ordained an A.M.E. minister and graduated from Wilberforce in 1886. His first church was one in Altoona, Pennsylvania, which boasted 13 members. These early years were difficult financially since A.M.E. ministers, though dependent upon the ecclesiastical hierarchy for their assignments, were dependent upon their own congregations for most of their maintenance. After two years at Altoona, he was assigned to a one-room church in an alley-like street in Allegheny City just north of Pittsburgh. In 1890, his superiors transferred him to a larger church in Springfield, Ohio. It was in Springfield that Ransom met a young elevator operator named Paul Laurence Dunbar. Ransom was so impressed by the poetry Dunbar had written that he undertook to get it published. He sold 100 copies of the original volume to his congregation, insisting that Negroes had an obligation to support their own artists. In 1893, Ransom was sent to Cleveland

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[29] Reverdy Ransom, The Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom's Son (Nashville, Tenn., 1950), 15-43; Reverdy Ransom, School Days at Wilberforce (Springfield, Ohio, no date), passim.; Reverdy Ransom, "Confessions of a Bishop," Ebony, V (March, 1950), 73; Bardolph, 146-147; Mather, 225-226.

and in 1896 to the influential and rapidly growing Bethel church in Chicago.[30]

In Chicago, Ransom became more outspoken against racial and economic injustice and about the role the church should play in combatting such wrongs. He began to take an active part in politics and to preach sermons on subjects of everyday concern. In his work he became friendly with Chicago reformers Clarence Darrow and Jane Addams. By 1900, Ransom was convinced that only a full-fledged institutional church and settlement house could solve the kind of problems his people faced in Chicago. He wrote in the A.M.E. Church Review in 1901:

> I do not want to initiate any heretical doctrines, but I believe the church of the twentieth century will be architecturally differently built from the church of the nineteenth century; I believe that it will be built so that it may serve as the centre of the life of the people, and in that centre the people may be educated and uplifted instead of in the saloons and the drinking halls. There is more political economy, more domestic economy, more almost of every phase that relates to actual life and problems that confront us every day, discussed in the winerooms and saloons than in some other centres that I might mention.[31]

Unable to convince the Chicago Bethel congregation of the need for an all-out campaign, he resigned from the pastorate and persuaded his superiors in the A.M.E. hierarchy to buy a building and give him the funds to begin an institutional church. From this pulpit, Ransom began a full-scale attack on the policy racket and drew in return several threats on his life as well as an attempt to dynamite his church. After this, he maintained that in Chicago he always preached with a loaded revolver on the pulpit beside him. Ransom met with little success in his campaign for social justice. He had only limited funds at his disposal and encountered increasing opposition from his superiors. More serious opposition came from other black ministers in the community who thought Ransom too radical in his frequent calls for equalitarianism and in his opposition to the realities of Chicago life, such as the close link between the political machine and the underworld that fed on the black slum. Finally, rather than accept the transfer out of his institutional church by his bishop, Ransom transferred himself to the New England Conference where he would be under the jurisdiction of another bishop. He was assigned to the A.M.E. Church in New Bedford , Massachusetts, where he spent nine months and then was reassigned to Charles Street Church in Boston in 1905.[32]

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[30] Ransom, Pilgrimage, 43-77; Bardolph, 126.

[31] Reverdy Ransom, "Work of the Methodist Church in the Twentieth Century," A.M.E. Church Review, XVIII (October, 1901), 152-153.

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[32] Ransom, Pilgrimage, 81-135; Ransom, "Confessions of a Bishop," 79.

At the turn of the century, Boston was the intellectual center of the Negro radical movement and Ransom fitted in perfectly with the mood of growing opposition to the leadership of Booker T. Washington. He linked himself with the upholders of the abolitionist tradition and firmly supported William Monroe Trotter, editor of the Boston Guardian and the most outspoken opponent of Washington's philosophy. While at Charles Street Church, Ransom was asked to speak at the meeting of the Niagara Movement at Harpers Ferry in 1906. W. E. B. DuBois noted that "that speech more than any single event stirred the great meeting. It led through its inspiration and eloquence to the eventual founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People."[33] Ransom was well enough respected in radical circles to be asked to give orations in Boston on the centennials of the birth of William Lloyd Garrison in 1905, John Greenleaf Whittier in 1907 and Charles Sumner in 1911, and in Brooklyn for Wendell Phillips in 1911.[34]

So serious was his split with Washington that in 1906 an incident in which Ransom was removed from the sleeping car of a train in Alabama because of Jim Crow rules brought an accusation from the Washington-controlled press that Ransom was actually removed because he was drunk. A scurrilous campaign began, in which the Age took part, depicting Ransom as a longtime drunkard and reprobate. The Age claimed that Ransom was so drunk on Easter Sunday, 1906, that he had to call another preacher to finish the service for him and insisted that Ransom had been "indulging devotedly in his little nips for fifteen years." Ransom, on the other hand, contended that the whole incident showed how much his opponents feared him because they felt his radical position would frighten away white support. He entitled his sermon on the Sunday he returned to Boston: "Sobriety, or How to Keep Sober."[35]

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[33] Ransom, Pilgrimage, 153-167, 196-197; Meier, 171-189; W. E. B. DuBois, "Introductory Note," in Reverdy Ransom, The Negro: The Hope or the Despair of Christianity (Boston, 1935), unpaged.

[34] Each speech appears in Reverdy Ransom, The Spirit of Freedom and Justice: Orations and Speeches (Nasvhille, 1926).

The Ransom who came to Bethel in New York in the summer of 1907 was an exciting preacher and a controversial national figure, qualities that helped bring large audiences to his church. What really distinguished Reverdy Ransom from other New York ministers of this period was his important role as a spokesman on national issues. This is not to say that Ransom disregarded local problems, only that he saw local problems much more in the context of what was happening and what had happened nationally to the black man in America. Having spent his entire life in Northern urban centers, Ransom had little sympathy for solutions such as industrial education, which was advocated by Booker T. Washington. "How can industrial education solve the Negro problem?" Ransom asked a Boston audience in 1905. "The South has assented to this proposition in which Northern sentiment seems to have acquiesced; but what the South undoubtedly means by this solution, is that a great peasant class, composed of ten million Negroes, shall be built up and established in this land; that they shall be trained to more intelligently till the soil, ply the trades and render domestic service."[36]

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[35] Ransom, Pilgrimage, 173-192; Ransom, "Confessions of a Bishop," 78-79; Age, June 28, 1906, July 12, 1906, July 19, 1906, July 26, 1906, August 16, 1906. It is interesting to note that soon after Ransom came to New York, the Age supported him and by 1911 was backing him for A.M.E. bishop. Ibid., March 6, 1911.

To Ransom, it was most important for the Negro to gain the full and equal political, social and economic rights that were his birthright since the Civil War. Without these, blacks were condemned to a kind of second-class citizenship that spelled doom for the future of the race and the nation. In his opinion, the black men of America should not sit back and obey the law and let these rights slowly be given to them by the ruling whites. It was necessary for black men to struggle, to organize and to elevate themselves. This was "the duty of the Negro in America," Ransom said in a speech in 1905, in which he disputed President Roosevelt's advice that Negroes should apply themselves to fulfilling their duties rather than agitating for rights. He argued:

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[36] Reverdy Ransom, How Should the Christian State Deal with the Race Problem? (Boston, 1905), unpaged.

> Man belongs to society; it is his duty to make his personal contribution of the best that is within him to the common good; he can do this only as he is given opportunity to freely associate with his fellow man. He should, therefore, seek to overthrow the artificial social barriers which would intervene to separate him from realizing the highest and best there is within him by freedom of association. It is man's duty to be loyal to his country and his flag, but when his country becomes a land of oppression and his flag an emblem of injustice and wrong, it becomes as much his duty to attack the enemies within the nation as to resist the foreign invader.[37]

Implicit in much of his early oratory and explicit in his actions after 1908 were criticism and finally outright desertion of the Republican Party, a position that very few blacks were willing to take in public before the 1930's. Time after time, Ransom warned that the Republican Party ought to ignite the fires that burned in its past or be prepared for a mass exodus by loyal blacks who for 40 years had waited patiently for Republican action on their behalf. Ransom finally turned to the Democratic Party, not because it was doing anything about the constitutional rights of black people, but because it seemed more concerned with the problems of the poor and the working class, groups to which the large majority of Negroes belonged. Ransom's recognition of this economic problem led him several times to suggest that, for blacks, socialism was the best political answer available since socialists like Jesus believed that "the rights of men are more sacred than the rights of property."[38]

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[37] Reverdy Ransom, "William Lloyd Garrison," The Spirit of Freedom and Justice, 7-8; Reverdy Ransom, "A Program for the Negro," A.M.E. Church Review, XVI (April, 1900), 423-430.

Ransom's fierce racial pride prompted him to preach numerous sermons at Bethel on black history. Often he spoke of the lives of black heroes, of the place of blacks in important historical events and of the history and importance of black institutions such as the A.M.E. Church and Wilberforce University. "Wilberforce University," he wrote, "is a standing rebuke to those who still persist in branding the Negro an inferior being. It was purchased by the Negro, is maintained by his efforts and is producing students who, when brought into actual competition, compare favorably with graduates from other colleges. Wilberforce is a monument to the Negro's civilization, intelligence and Christianity." His pride in his black racial heritage led him to condemn Negroes who complained, as he said: "''O God! if I was only white. 'O God! if I had just enough white blood in me and my hair was straight so none could suspect that I has a strain of Negro blood in me!'...They do not believe in its future, they do not believe in its destiny." He asserted his own pride in race when he wrote in his autobiography: "One thing I know, there is little of the Anglo-Saxon in me. With him I have small kinship, either in temperament or characteristics....The broadening stream and ever rising tide of African life can neither be dried up nor damned by law, by force, by education or by social contract."[39]

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[38] Reverdy Ransom, "The Negro and Socialism," A.M.E. Church Review, XIV (October, 1897), 196-197; Reverdy Ransom,

While in New York, Ransom widened the activities of Bethel along the institutional church pattern and engaged in every possible activity for the betterment of the community. His mission, he announced to his congregation in his opening sermon, on August 15, 1907, was "to serve not only Bethel Church, but the larger life and needs of the city." He intended "to make the pulpit as large as the varied civic, social, moral and spiritual interests of the people in the community." He strayed as far from traditional fundamentalism as any minister of a mass church during this early period, refusing, for instance, to preach against dancing and theatres. He became the favorite pastor of black musicians, actors and prize fighters, and was made a

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The Disadvantages and Opportunities of the Colored Youth (Cleveland, 1894), 36.

[39] Ransom, School Days at Wilberforce, 7; Ransom, The Disadvantages and Opportunities of the Colored Youth, 18; Ransom, Pilgrimage, 16.

member of the Frogs, the club for black entertainers in New York.[40]

When Ransom left Bethel in 1912 to become editor of the A.M.E. Church Review, he also established a mission in the Tenderloin on West Thirty-first Street called St. Simon the Cyrene. The mission was to minister to the needs of those farthest down in the worst slum in New York City. He remained in New York City and maintained the mission until he was elected bishop in 1924. Throughout his long and productive life, Ransom published numerous books and pamphlets. His chief contribution lay in his ability to articulate the aspirations of a deprived people living in a country that promised much but delivered far less. He voiced these aspirations in a speech delivered in 1904:

> You may call me a dreamer when I tell you that my vision beholds the fetters of race and class broken from the limbs of humanity forever more. I see humanity with arms so long that brother joins hands with brother across the broad expanse of sea, until, in a circle that girdles the globe, man to his brother man is joined in a loving hand-clasp around the world.
>
> I see the men of a new civilization rejoicing in the fulfillment of our golden dreams when from the centuries of its wonderings humanity comes back to its common unity, knowing but one family altar, that the altar of humanity; but one brotherhood, that the brotherhood of man; but one fatherhood, that the fatherhood of God.[41]

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[40] Ransom, Pilgrimage, 207; Age, August 15, 1907.

[41] Ransom, Pilgrimage, 226-234; Reverdy Ransom, Duty and Destiny(New Bedford, Mass., 1904), 7-8; Age, August 14, 1913.

Under the leadership of Ransom, Bethel Church reached the peak of its reputation. The church on West Twenty-fifth Street housed numerous mass protest meetings at which the minister uttered fiery sermons on topics of present-day concern, and the congregation of over 1,000 worked in a number of groups for the betterment of the community. But, after Ransom left in 1912, Bethel's influence again declined. Hampered by uninspired leadership at the local and denominational levels and by a denominational policy that allowed a minister to remain at one church for only four years, Bethel was constantly split into disputing factions. With good leadership, Bethel, like Mother Zion and Abyssinian, was a source of real strength to the black community because it was a prestige church with a theology and social point of view that attracted a mass base. To turn such a tenuous relationship into a vital force, however, took the genius of a Reverdy Ransom or an A. Clayton Powell; without this the congregation became a disunited, ineffectual conglomerate.

Given the fact that Manhattan's black population hardly increased at all between 1820 and 1870, it is not surprising that no other ultimately significant church was founded after Bethel until 1871 when St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church opened On West Thirty-fifth Street, organized by former members of Mother Zion Church.[42] St. Mark's moved to West Forty-eighth Street in 1889 and in 1895 settled in the midst of the most respectable block in the black Tenderloin, Fifty-third Street west of Sixth Avenue. St. Mark's could claim by 1905 a membership exceeding 1,000 and property, including a parsonage and a church building whose main auditorium seated 1,800, worth over $100,000. Led by the influential and very able William H. Brooks, St. Mark's rivalled St. Philip's as a congregation marked by wealth and social prestige. St. Mark's remained in its Fifty-third Street location until 1926, well after the black population had moved to Harlem, assuming the role of a "downtown" church with a commuter membership.[43]

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[42] Negro population in Manhattan in 1820 was 10,368 and in 1870 it had climbed to only 13,072. United States Census Office, Ninth Census, 1870 (Washington, 1872), I, 51.

William Brooks had come to St. Mark's from Washington, D.C., in 1897. He was born in Maryland in 1859 and attended first Morgan College and then Howard University where he received his B.A. He went from Howard to Union Theological Seminary in New York where he prepared himself for the ministry. Before he came to St. Mark's, he ministered to a number of small churches in West Virginia and Maryland and was made a presiding elder in the Washington area in 1892.[44]

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[43] "St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church," Colored American Magazine, X (June, 1906), 381-385; United States Works Progress Administration, The Historical Records Survey, Inventory of the Church Archives in New York City: The Methodist Church (New York, 1940), 77; Maude Griffin, "The Negro Church and Its Social Work--St Mark's," Charities, XV (October 7, 1905), 75-76.

Brooks quickly became a spokesman and leader of black New York, and, in the wake of the race riot of 1900, he spoke out vigorously against the mobs and against the police and demanded a public investigation of the riot. He was instrumental in the formation and became chairman of the Citizens' Protective League which was formed to channel the protests toward some constructive reform by the city. Brooks never gave up joining and forming organizations which he hoped would exert political pressure upon the power structure to afford more equality for the Negro. He helped revive the Citizens' Protective League after the 1905 riot, helped form the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, the Committee for Improving the Industrial Conditions of Negroes and the Afro-American Council, and he was one of only five men who were listed on the national boards of both the Urban League and the N.A.A.C.P. at their inception. Nor did he neglect charitable organizations, being a trustee of the White Rose Home, the Union Rescue Mission and the Brooklyn Orphan Asylum. He was also a director of the Afro-American Realty Company, a backer of the Metropolitan Mercantile and Realty Company and a supporter of Dr. William Bulkley's evening school for adult Negroes. St. Mark's in the first decade of the twentieth century offered more services to the community than any other black church in the city. These services included a day nursery, poor relief funds, adult education classes, employment aid for newcomers to the city, missions in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Harlem, a Mutual Aid Society which provided sickness and death benefits to members and a lyceum whose aim was "to cultivate the intellect and afford its members an opportunity for social intercourse in the most helpful way."[45]

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[44] Hartshorn, 476; Richardson, _National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race_, 223; Mather, 40; Blanche Ferguson, _Countee_

Reverend Brooks was closer to Booker T. Washington than his support of the N.A.A.C.P. might indicate. He was an advocate of the theory that Negroes needed to work hard and to live soberly, perhaps harder and more soberly than whites, in order legitimately to be able to demand equal treatment. He supported industrial and vocational training in New York City and called on Negroes to go into business for themselves and for others of the race to support black businesses. At the same time, he did not hesitate to level strong criticism against the white power structure when rather clear cases of unfair treatment were evident, as in the riots of 1900 and 1905. Still, even in these cases,

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Cullen and the Negro Renaissance (New York, 1966), 7; Mary White Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down (New York, 1947), 24.

[45] Scheiner, 125-126, 152-153; Osofsky, 50-51, 98; Meier, 296; Mather, 40; Ovington, 24; United States Works Progress Administration, The Historical Records Survey, 77; Griffin,

Brooks called for moderation and stressed the necessity of using the legal means of redress on the part of the blacks. He blamed the 1905 riot not so much on racism but on the "spirit of lawlessness that abounds in the land," in the form of "lynchings, strikes, mob violence, desecration of the Sabbath, dishonesty in high places, gambling, drinking." Finding this spirit pervading both the white and black communities, he recommended as a solution that if the law should shut down "every dive and den and drive out of the city every idler, gambler, drunkard and sportsman, it would do my people a service."[46]

Through his sermons and his church work, Brooks worked hard to eradicate those evil forces which he felt were making the way to freedom and participation in middle-class American life for his people much more difficult. He urged his people "everywhere to live soberly, act orderly, respect the law and constitutional authority, and in return demand ample protection of all the rights guaranteed us by the Constitution of the United States." To him, the practice of Christinaity was to be an active force in ordering

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75; Age, February 9, 1905, August 10, 1905, August 17, 1905, November 25, 1909, January 27, 1910, October 6, 1910.

[46] Scheiner, 125-126, 152-153; Age, August 10, 1905, December 7, 1905, November 7, 1907, December 5, 1907, July 8, 1909, February 23, 1911.

people's lives and in providing a firm basis for a stable society.[47]

Reverend Brooks felt that the support and approval of whites was essential for a solution of Negro problems. If the black community in New York became like the best of the white community, he thought it would be accepted much more easily. White friends, thus, should be encouraged and cultivated, not subjected to criticism. Reverend Brooks pointed out that Booker T. Washington's luncheon with President Roosevelt in 1901 was a mistake because of the great abuse heaped on the President by Southerners. "Mr. Roosevelt had the right to invite Mr. Washington, and Mr. Washington had the right to accept," said Brooks. "But is it the best and highest wisdom to make our friends suffer because it is in our power to do so?"[48]

Brooks was highly respected by both black and white leaders. The Colored American Magazine called him in 1905, "unquestionably and concededly...the most influential, as he is ablest, of the Afro-American clergy of New York City." Mary White Ovington "went to see him again and again for advice and encouragement," and noted that the white leadership of the Methodist Church appreciated the "excellence and importance of his work /and therefore/ kept him in New York." In 1920, he was chosen by the New York Conference as a delegate to the Methodist Episcopal General Conference. Reverend Brooks died in 1923, just a few months after he had retired from the pulpit of St. Mark's.[49]

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[47] Age, November 14, 1907, December 5, 1907, March 18, 1909, December 9, 1909, November 10, 1910, February 22, 1912, January 28, 1915.

[48] William H. Brooks, quoted in Ovington, 25.

Mt. Olivet Baptist Church was organized in the early 1870's with the support of the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church and located on West Twenty-sixth Street. Mt. Olivet's early success was attributable to Daniel W. Wisher who took over the struggling church in its early days. Wisher was born in 1853 in Norfolk, Virginia, the son of freed slaves. His father was a part-time Baptist preacher. He attended school through high school, then worked as a house painter and preached on Sundays before coming to New York on a visit in 1876. During the visit he attended and preached at Mt. Olivet. So impressive was his performance that the congregation urged him to move permanently to New York and assume control of the church. He accepted the offer and immediately began to reorganize the church by making its appeal directly to the newcomers from the South. He obtained the help of wealthy white benefactors, including John D. Rockefeller, through the Baptist City Mission Society. In 1885, Mt. Olivet purchased an edifice on fashionable West Fifty-third Street, and, by 1896, it could boast of a membership of 1,450.[50]

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[49] "St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church," 382; J. C. Hartzell, "Methodism and the Negro in the United States," Journal of Negro History, VIII (July, 1923), 313; Ovington, 25; Age, March 3, 1923.

Theologically, Wisher was a fundamentalist who was struck by the great amount of evil surrounding his flock in the metropolis. His sermons emphasized repentance and the need to find strength in God's word in order to ward off temptation. His actions emphasized community work and the need for education to battle the evil surrounding the church. He split the congregation in 1897 when he supported Tammany Hall in the municipal election, and, in 1899, he and his supporters left Mt. Olivet to form the Baptist Temple Church. Wisher failed in his attempt to duplicate his Mt. Olivet success at Baptist Temple, and when, in 1911, the congregation opposed his attempts to move the church to Harlem, he resigned from the pulpit.[51]

Wisher was followed to the Mt. Olivet pulpit in 1899 by the nationally known black preacher, Charles T. Walker, the "Black Spurgeon." Walker was born a slave in Georgia in 1858, the youngest of 11 children. His coachman father, deacon of a church where two of his uncles preached, died before he was born. His mother died when he was eight and he spent the rest of his childhood with his uncle. At the age of 16, Walker enrolled in Augusta Baptist Institute (later Morehouse College), determined to work his way through despite the fact that he had very little savings and no prior formal schooling. On the verge of leaving because of lack of funds, he was rescued by the school's president who found three wealthy Ohio humanitarians willing to subsidize him. Walker was liscensed to preach in 1876 and began plying his trade at small country churches in the Augusta vicinity. In 1883, he was called to head the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Augusta. It was from this pulpit that his fame as a master of the evangelical style of preaching spread.

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[50] Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, Mortgage Liquidation Journal (New York, 1946), 9; Olga M. Brown, "Negro Religious Worship in New York City from 1625 to 1947" (M.A. Thesis, New York University, 1948), 15-16.

[51] Daniel W. Wisher, Echoes from the Gospel Trumpet (New York, 1896), passim.; Silas Xavier Floyd, Life of Charles T. Walker, D.D. (Nashville, 1902), 102; Age, May 26, 1910, December 8, 1910, March 16, 1911.

Walker soon became known in white circles and many winter tourists, including William Howard Taft and John D. Rockefeller, made it a point to visit Tabernacle and hear Walker on their way south. After serving as an army chaplain during the Spanish-American War, Walker came north to assume the pulpit of the troubled Mt. Olivet Church. Although he plunged into the problems of New York City with his usual exuberance, Walker was apparently never happy away from the South. After quadrupling the membership of Mt. Olivet and beginning the first colored Y.M.C.A. in the country, he expressed a desire in 1901 to return to

Tabernacle in Augusta, which had never officially accepted his resignation. A mass meeting was called to dissuade him and speech after speech from black and white ministers, businessmen, politicians and editors extolled his virtues and the city's desperate need for him. Walker was impressed enough to stay two and a half years longer, but finally he returned to Augusta in 1904. When he left, Mt. Olivet was the largest black church in the city with a membership of 4,000. Rumors abounded in New York for several years after he left that he would return, which troubled his successor at Mt. Olivet, but Walker remained content at Tabernacle for the rest of his life.[52]

As the support from conservative white elements within the Baptist Church might indicate, Walker was a leading exponent of the accommodationist philosophy. Booker T. Washington knew Walker and valued his ability to work with Southern whites. In Walker's view, the Negro would be content with "simple justice--that is all." He saw blacks as desirous of duplicating white accomplishments. The Negro, in his opinion,"wants better opportunities. He wants to be admitted to the industrial and mechanical trades. He wants a chance to earn a living. He is striving to be honest, industrious, intelligent, economical and self-reliant."

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[52] Floyd, 19-124; Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, 9; Woodson, 244-246; Bardolph, 107.

Walker's biographer notes that he first received national recognition when he rose before a meeting of the National Baptist Convention and attacked a statement critical of Southern white Baptists. He moved that the Convention thank the Southern Baptist Convention for its aid to colored people. Later, after his experience in the Spanish-American War, Walker applauded the American military action in Cuba, calling the "vast majority" of Cuban people "ignorant and shiftless" and "incapable of self-government."[53]

In New York, Walker was chiefly concerned with new arrivals from the South, a natural concern since Mt. Olivet had always appealed directly to these newcomers and since Walker understood from his own experience some of the problems of moving to a large city. It was for the youths among these migrants that he called in 1900 for the founding of a colored Y.M.C.A. "So much trouble is made by the poor fellows having no place to go when they come here," he said. "What we need is a place that shall be known to every young man in the South as a home where he can come and find friends." In the pulpit, Walker was a fundamentalist who spoke of a promised land in the hereafter for those who lived on earth the life of Christian humility and decency, and of a fiery hell and eternal damnation for the smoking, drinking, dancing sinners.[54]

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[53] Floyd, 78-79, 84-87, 152; Meier, 221-222.

In 1904, Walker was followed in Mt. Olivet's pulpit by M. W. Gilbert whose short tenure was wracked by dissension. Gilbert, born of slave parents in 1864 in South Carolina, had a distinguished educational background that included an M.A. from Colgate University and a B.D. from Union Theological Seminary. Prior to coming to Mt. Olivet, he had served churches in Nashville, Jacksonville, Savannah and Charleston. He had taught at the Colored State College in Orangeburg, South Carolina, and at his original alma mater, Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina. Gilbert was a friend of Walker who apparently suggested him for the job at Mt. Olivet.[55]

It was his "intellectual" background that was at the root of the dissension in the Mt. Olivet congregation under Reverend Gilbert. In 1907, a controversy arose when a part of the congregation criticized Gilbert for being an "intellectual" rather than an "emotional" preacher. In a letter to the Age, Gilbert asserted that he would not "condescend to give them the old plantation 'whangdoodle' style of preaching." A few weeks later the dissident faction refused to let Gilbert preach, loudly singing hymns every time he started to speak. The pastor returned the favor by calling the police to remove the hymnsingers from the church. The dissidents then took legal action to restrain Gilbert from his control of the church. The suit dragged on until 1910, when the State Supreme Court decided that the state had no jurisdiction in the matter. By this time, Gilbert had expelled those who opposed him. Gilbert's opponents also contended that he demanded too high a salary and thereby put himself far above the economic level of the congregation, just as his sermons put him far above them intellectually. It was further contended that he ran the church dictatorially by packing church meetings with his friends and by expelling his enemies. Gilbert ultimately left Mt. Olivet in 1910 to assume the presidency of Selma University in Alabama. By that time, the membership of the church had dwindled to 915.[56]

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[54] Floyd, 116-157; The New York Daily Tribune, August 29, 1900.

[55] Hartshorn, 490; Age, January 4, 1906.

The split in his congregation prevented Reverend Gilbert from accomplishing very much for the community through the church. Other than his numerous references to the dissension, his recorded statements are few. He was a member of the Citizens' Protective League in 1905 and the Afro-American Council. He spoke often about the value of education for the race and the need to support the race's institutions of higher learning. During his stay in New York, he was elected to offices in the Southern New York Baptist Association and to the Baptist City Mission Society of New York. He also was the first Negro to be elected to the Permanent Council of Baptists of New York City, indicating that he was well regarded by his fellow ministers, black and white.[57]

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[56] Ernest Jasper Hopper, "A Northern Negro Group" (M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1912), 43; Osofsky, 160-161; Age, October 17, 1907, November 7, 1907, December 12, 1907, February 6, 1908, February 27, 1908, April 9, 1908, April 16, 1908, May 18, 1908, June 4, 1908, September 10, 1908, September 24, 1908, April 21, 1910, October 6, 1910, December 22, 1910.

Although there had been a black congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Manhattan as early as 1821, St. James Presbyterian Church was not organized until 1895. Apparantly because of geographical reasons, part of the congregation of the Shiloh Presbyterian Church began holding services in the Tenderloin under the leadership of Pierce Butler Thompkins. The church enjoyed some popularity and received enough aid from the New York Presbytery to be able to purchase a building of its own on West Fifty-first Street in 1903.[58]

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[57] Hartshorn, 490; Age, February 9, 1905, August 2, 1906, May 20, 1909, October 21, 1909, October 6, 1910.

[58] Theodore F. Savage, The Presbyterian Church in New York City (New York, 1949), 194-195; United States Works Progress Administration, The Historical Records Survey, Inventory of the Church Archives in New York City: Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (New York, 1940), 81; Ottley and Weatherby, 55; Age, May 2, 1912.

In 1902, Thompkins was followed in the St. James pulpit by C. Leroy Butler. Reverend Butler was an outspoken advocate of the philosophy of economic self-help and the need for the Negro to prove himself by achieving success in the business world. Following his own advice, he became interested in the affairs of the Metropolitan Mercantile and Realty Company, a stock company owned by Negroes selling lots outside of New York City. Here was a perfect example of self-help, a black-owned business operated for the good of the entire black community. Unfortunately, the company went into bankruptcy in 1911, and the officers were tried and found guilty of conspiracy and fraud.[59]

The Metropolitan Mercantile and Realty Company enlisted the support of a number of ministers, including Brooks, Henderson, Gilbert and McMullen, but only Butler was implicated in the court action. At the trial it was pointed out that clergymen were hired both at a salary and on a commission basis to act as agents of the company and that they sold to their parishioners in large amounts. It was said that in "every way, from serving on the Advisory Board to almost preaching the excellence of the company from the pulpits,they drew in their people by hundreds." Butler testified that he thought such activities were "proper and justifiable because other companies did it."

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[59] Age, February 9, 1905, June 21, 1906, October 6, 1910, April 25, 1912.

He resigned from his pastorate in March, 1911, just after the scandal broke, to take a position as an evangelist for the Presbyterian Council. In 1913, he was found guilty of the fraudulent misuse of funds and served a short jail sentence.[60]

The involvement of black ministers in real estate activity was not unusual. In 1906, the Reverend E. E. Jackson of the Zion Baptist Church began promoting from the pulpit the affairs of the Real Estate Deposit and Investor Company of which he was a director. The company was organized to do undertaking, perform repairing and decorating work and act as an employment agency, but its main activity seemed to be the sale of lots in New Jersey. Reverend Jackson did not hesitate to promote the sale of these lots from his pulpit even on Easter Sunday. The company apparently went bankrupt in 1907, for there was no further mention of it after the announcement of a suit by the *Age* to collect past due advertising bills. Ministers of smaller storefront churches were more likely to hold jobs to supplement their preaching income. For example, Reverend E. W. Wainwright of Shiloh Baptist Church combined his preaching with an undertaking business and advertised in the *Age*: "The services of Rev. Wainwright can be obtained for marriages, sickness or funerals any hour of the day or night." The Reverend Oliver Gatling ran the Instant Relief Company and Reverend Robert T. Mont was an undertaker and embalmer as well as an officer of the Real Estate Deposit and Investor Company.[61]

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[60] *Ibid.*, April 25, 1912, May 2, 1912, May 9, 1912, May 30, 1912, July 10, 1913, July 21, 1913.

Rounding out the eight major churches established in Manhattan in the nineteenth century was the Union Baptist Church, which dates to 1898. Union was synonomous with its founder and pastor, George H. Sims, who remained at the head of the church until succeeded by his son in the late 1930's. Reverend Sims was born in 1871 in Cumberland, Virginia, of parents who had been slaves. He had only seven years of formal schooling, but worked at a number of different jobs in his youth and picked up enough practical experience to get a license as a mechanical engineer and a job as an elevator operator when he came to New York. He studied theology part time and was ordained a Baptist preacher in 1895. Sims founded Union Baptist in 1898, in a storefront on West Sixty-third Street, because he felt the people in the San Juan Hill district, especially those recent migrants from the South, were being neglected by organized Christianity. He devoted the rest of his life to preaching the simple fundamentalist gospel he had been taught in his youth in the rural South, but attempting to adapt its social message to the realities of the Northern black ghetto. His success was astounding. By 1912, Union Baptist boasted a church edifice worth $77,000 and a membership of over 1,500.[62]

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[61] Ibid., March 9, 1905, January 18, 1906, February 1, 1906, March 1, 1906, April 19, 1906, August 23, 1906, September 6, 1906, September 27, 1906, January 31, 1907, February 7, 1907.

The services at Union Baptist were reminiscent of the Southern Baptist "shouting" churches. Mary White Ovington noted that when Reverend Sims talked of Christ from his pulpit, "Jesus became alive, a workman, a carpenter who took off his apron and went out to answer the call to preach." Christianity came alive in Union Church, "there was much shouting, much noisy getting of religion." One of his most popular sermons, which he repeated often, was entitled "The Sun Do Move." In it Reverend Sims, citing scripture as proof, contended that the earth was not round. The Age noted in 1910 that Sims was so eloquent in dealing with this subject that "the majority of his hearers appeared to agree with him that the earth was flat." But on the ghetto streets of New York, the rhetoric of fundamental Christianity was not enough, the temptations were too many and too compelling. And Sims adapted his gospel to the street, helping to run the Hope Day Nursery, giving support to the Children's Aid Society and the Walton Free Kindergarten and beginning an industrial school, a literary society, a realty company and an undertaking company at the church. These actions were even more significant since Union Baptist was only a struggling storefront in 1900, and even by 1908, its members could contribute only an average of about 10 cents a week to the church.[63]

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[62] Richardson, National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race, 266; Mather, 244; Hopper, 43; Age, March 15, 1906, November 12, 1908.

Sims spoke often about the necessity of developing black business enterprise and the necessity of supporting these fledgling businesses. Through the church, he fostered the Sims Union Realty Company and the Dillar-Brown Undertaking Company as cooperative ventures run by and for the members of the church. Like most of his fellow ministers at the turn of the century, Reverend Sims was not an angry protester against the ills of an unfair and bigoted society. Rather, he felt the key to the solution of the "Negro problem" was education, hard work and a stable society constructed upon Christian values. The proof of his philosophy was that it had worked rather well for George Henry Sims, son of slave parents who by the end of his life could boast of being a trustee of three colleges, president of the New York Colored Baptist Convention and the New England Baptist Missionary Convention, vice-president of the National Baptist Convention, a member of the New York County

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[63] Ovington, 39-40; Blascoer, 50; Mather, 244; Age, April 23, 1908, June 2, 1910.

Republican Committee and an author of two books.[64]

To the eight churches established by 1900, one more was added in the first decade of the twentieth century. The City Mission Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church, recognizing the lack of religious facilities for the rapidly expanding black population of the San Juan Hill district and also reacting to the greatly increased number of West Indian migrants among the newcomers to this district, appointed John Wesley Johnson city missionary among Negro people in 1904.[65]

Reverend Johnson, who was born in 1866 **in Virginia** and educated at Payne Theological Seminary in Petersburg, was a member of the Payne faculty when he was called to New York. In 1905, St. Cyprian's Protestant Episcopal Church was established in three brownstones on West Sixty-third Street with Johnson as its head. This church never became an independent congregation, remaining an institution of the City Mission Society. This peculiar situation allowed St. Cyprian's to provide a large number of activities and social services that an independent black congregation fully paying its own way could never have supported in its early years. For instance, a milk station was begun in 1909 which sold pure milk modified for babies to mothers of the neighborhood, regardless of religion, "at a price that barely wards off the possibility of a charge of pauperizing charity." This work was carried on at a cost of about $2,000 yearly, contributed by friends of the church. The church also provided classes in sewing, dressmaking, embroidery and cooking, a model flat, a laundry that provided employment for members, an employment bureau and a lecture series. In 1908, St. Cyprian's dedicated a new building on West Sixty-third Street worth $45,000, which included a stage, a gymnasium and a main auditorium seating 650. The gymnasium became a popular training spot for black fighters. Reverend Johnson remained at St. Cyprian's until his death in 1930.[66]

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[64] Mather, 244; Age, April 13, 1905, March 15, 1906, April 23, 1908, November 12, 1908, November 17, 1910, March 30, 1911.

[65] In 1890 there were 1,549 foreign born Negroes in New York State, in 1900, 3,552, and in 1910, 12,851. United States Census Office, Eleventh Census, 1890: Population (Washington, 1895), I, 397, 576; United States Census Office, Twelfth Census, 1900: Population, I, 593, 702; United States Census Office, Thirteenth Census, 1910: Population, I, 740, III, 226.

The years from the late nineteenth century to 1915 were a remarkable period for New York City's black churches. By 1915, five had found ministers who stayed in New York until their deaths--Hutchens Bishop at St. Philip's, William H. Brooks at St. Mark's, George Sims at Union, John W. Johnson at St. Cyprian's and A. Clayton Powell at Abyssinian.

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[66] United States Works Progress Administration, The Historical Records Survey, Inventory of the Church Archives in New York City: The Protestant Episcopal Church (2 vols., New York, 1940), I, 78-79; Blascoer, 49-50; The New York

Four churches were still searching for a permanent pastor, but in their search, Charles T. Walker at Mt. Olivet and Reverdy Ransom at Bethel had made important contributions to New York's religious life. Most of the black pastors of this period had been born and raised in the South. Slavery was a remembered experience at least in the eyes of their parents. Most had risen from backgrounds of poverty and had spent their adult years in the North. Most were formerly educated at one of the Southern black divinity schools. Thus, relative to the experience of rural black preachers, the educational level was a good deal higher. Ideologically, both conservative and radical positions were represented, but it was clear that the influence of Booker T. Washington was much less strong in the New York churches than elsewhere in the country, especially in the South. Although fundamentalism was by far the dominant theological position, it was combined with a real attention to the social and institutional needs of the community. New York's ministers were by no means holding out against the modern concepts of the social gospel or the institutional church. Knowing something of the churches and the men who headed them in the early years of the twentieth century, let us next turn to an examination of the role these men played in New York's black community during these years.

World, May 18, 1930; Hopper, 43; Ted Poston, "The Battler from San Juan Hill," Post, May 4, 1958; Age, May 14, 1908, January 21, 1909, August 3, 1916, May 24, 1930.

CHAPTER II

PRE-HARLEM:
THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE LEADING CLERGYMEN IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY, 1900-1915

Though a number of students of the Negro church and of black urban society have not been impressed with the importance of black ministers in Northern urban communities, it is clear that the leading black clergymen played a central role in the black community in New York City. Like their Southern brethren, New York's leading pastors were the natural leaders of the black community and their churches were, as in the South, the most important institutions within that community. Moreover, unlike their Southern brethren and unlike the traditional stereotype of all Negro clergymen, New York's leading black pastors were not tied to a theology that stressed the glories of the afterlife and a passive acceptance of the difficulties of life on earth. Instead, New York's important black clergymen preached a rather modern social gospel and a religion that stressed the necessity of improving conditions of black people in this world and that refused to accept a permanent second-class status.

The Southern black preacher had traditionally been understood as being something more to his community than just a spiritual leader. To Carter Woodson, an historian of the Negro church, the preacher was "the walking encyclopedia, the counsellor of the unwise, the friend of the unfortunate, the social welfare organizer, and the interpreter of the signs of the times." But most students have also argued that Southern Negro pastors used their power as a force for accommodation, first to the slavery system and, after emancipation, to segregation and second-class status. Thus, the traditional theology of black ministers in the South emphasized patience and endurance in confronting the difficulties of life in this world on the promise of an untroubled afterlife. According to this theology, the hardships of life for a black in America were really God's way of preparing one to appreciate the perfection of heavenly life.[1]

Students of the Northern black church and black communities in the early part of the twentieth century have tended to emphasize this traditional theology of the black pastor while also pointing out that the move to the city weakened the traditional importance of the church and the minister to the black community. It has generally been concluded that the Negro church lagged far behind white urban churches in adopting the more progressive institutional church ideas so prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A University of Chicago divinity student, John Henry Lewis, noted in a 1914 study of Negro churches that "the city churches have a large opportunity for social service, but only in a few instances is there any systematic social work." Another Chicago divinity student, Joseph C. Carroll, argued four years later that the institutional church was not highly developed among Negroes. And H. Paul Douglass, the most prolific student of the urban church, suggested that the Negro church in the city withstood "environmental pressure" toward "institutional evolution."[2]

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[1] Woodson, 281. The basic work on the theology of the black pastor is Benjamin E. Mays, "The Development of the Idea of God in Contemporary Negro Literature" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago Divinity School, 1935). This was later published as Benjamin E. Mays, The Negro's God (Boston, 1938). His findings are largely corroborated by Allison Davis, "The Negro Church and Associations in the Lower South," Research Memorandum prepared for the Carnegie-Myrdal Study of the Negro in America (Schomburg Collection); and by Hortense Powdermaker, After Freedom: A Cultural Study in the Deep South (New York, 1939), 223-285.

White social workers who commented directly on the black community in New York City during this period were also generally unimpressed with the amount of institutional activity undertaken by New York's black churches. Yet, interestingly enough, all of these observers picked out one or more churches as exceptions, models upon which they felt the other churches should have been patterned. Maude

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[2] John Henry Lewis, "Social Services in Negro Churches" (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago Divinity School, 1914), 18; Joseph C. Carroll, "The Negro Institutional Church in America" (M.A. Thesis, University of Chicago Divinity School, 1918), passim.; H. Paul Douglass, The Church in the Changing City: Case Studies Illustrating Adaptation (New York, 1927), xv.

Griffin cited St. Mark's, Henry McGuinn pointed to St. Philip's, Frances Blascoer spoke highly of Abyssinian, St. Cyprian's and Union as well as St. Philip's, and Mary White Ovington praised Mt. Olivet and Bethel as well as Union, St. Cyprian's and St. Mark's. As a group the contemporary observations would seem to blunt the general indictment of the institutional activity of New York's black churches. What the evidence points to is that as a group the leading ministers who guided these established churches were in fact very active in developing institutional activities and were preaching a quite modern and progressive social gospel.[3]

The disagreement with the more general interpretations may stem from their generalizing about the black urban minister with the model of the storefront preacher in mind. When studying the leading pastors a much different picture emerges, one of men who continued in the traditional leadership position of the rural Negro pastor, but who adopted a new theology much more in harmony with conditions in the Northern city. These men were vitally interested in improving the quality of life in the everyday world of their communicants. The churches they headed were the strongholds of the independent existence of black New Yorkers.

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[3] Griffin, 75; Henry J. McGuinn, "Recreation," in Thomas J. Woofter, ed., Negro Problems in Cities (Garden City, N.Y., 1928), 253; Blascoer, 48; Mary White Ovington, Half A Man: The Status of the Negro in New York (New York, 1911), 116, 119.

They provided a platform for protesting bigotry and racism, a refuge for migrants escaping from the South and a training ground for future race leaders.

The activities of the New York churches and their ministers divide into three general categories during these years from the turn of the twentieth century to the eve of World War I. First, the churches served as the main institutions through which the socialization process took place. The churches were the places where people met, exchanged ideas and information, spent much of their leisure time and were introduced into the community. Along this line, the minister served the community as the key socialization agent, the individual responsible for the proper working of the socialization process. Secondly, Negro churches served as welfare agencies. Through the church, campaigns were waged to aid those who desperately needed help and to cleanse the community of its anti-social elements so that more individuals would not be forced into lives of depravity. Finally, the churches provided the independent leadership necessary to enable the community to develop a social and political point of view of its own. Most of the early black leaders were ministers and they encouraged their followers to organize and help themselves in business, education and politics.

In the area of socialization the black churches and their ministers were chiefly significant in providing church members with a place to meet other people and a place to spend one's time when not at work. Many ministers recognized this as a necessary function of the urban church and agreed with A. Clayton Powell who told his congregation in 1911 that the "church must recognize that man is a social being, that he was created by the Almighty for society and that if the church does not treat him cordially he will go elsewhere seeking social gratification." People in the city worked and lived for the most part divorced from nature. There was, therefore, a far greater need for organized leisure-time activities. "We criticize people for going to places where the environment is unwholesome," said Powell, "but where are they going? If they stand on the corner, they are arrested. If they stay in their stuffy flats, they die of consumption." If churches were slow in responding to this need, the free enterprise society was not. To Powell, there was "more sociability and cordiality in the average barroom, poolroom, ballroom, than in the average church." By 1900, there was a real fear that the essence of Christian life would be destroyed by these secular activities if the church did not attempt to compete with them.[4]

Every church considered here had a range of activities that increased with each year and was limited only by the financial capacity of the congregation and the energy of the minister. Many of these activities were the usual voluntary organizations that served only members of the congregation. Choirs, usher's organizations, money-raising clubs, Bible classes, floral societies, young men's guilds, young women's auxiliaries, Boy and Girl Scout troops were the most common. Some churches organized activities open to anyone, member or not, such as lyceums, athletics, vocational education projects, plays and concerts. And many activities were of a service nature, groups to visit the sick, groups to dispense clothing and food to the poor, employment agencies and summer camps.

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[4] Age, September 21, 1911.

St. Philip's and St. Mark's were in the best financial position to offer services of this kind. St. Mark's, during the pastorate of Reverend Brooks, was open every night of the week and all day Sunday. It boasted of its monthly magazine, of its Mutual Aid Society which paid benefits to those members who became incapacitated and of its lyceum which scheduled weekly meetings on a great diversity of subjects and attracted well-known speakers to its platform. St. Mark's Lyceum remained a popular Sunday afternoon activity for New York Negroes until well into the 1920's.[5]

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[5] Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, 24; Griffin, 75-76; Age, March 6, 1913.

St. Philip's had many voluntary organizations and was especially active in providing recreational facilities for young people. The voluntary organizations included Knights of King Arthur, Junior St. Christopher Society, Intermediate St. Christopher Society, Senior St. Christopher Society, Men's Guild, Brotherhood of St. Andrew, Men's Bible Class, St. Mary's Guild, Junior St. Agnes Society, Intermediate St. Agnes Society, Senior St. Agnes Society, Altar Guild, Auxiliary to the Board of Missions, Dorcas Society, Auxiliary to Parish Home, Women's Bible Class. Reverend Bishop began a Big Brother program, organized a Boy Scout troop and several clubs for young boys and girls, developed summer outings and a supervised playground, encouraged dances and included a gymnasium in the plans for the new church in Harlem.[6]

Relative to its size, St. Cyprian's had the most ambitious program. The new building dedicated in 1908 included a gymnasium in which a full complement of athletic events was scheduled; the church held two dances every week, supervised a playground during the daytime, staged a Sunday evening lecture series and ran several vocational education classes. St. Cyprian's was noticeably lacking in the kind of voluntary organizations that proliferated at St. Philip's, attempting instead to make its activities materially useful to its impoverished congregation. Its sewing, embroidery, dressmaking and cooking classes sold their products to the patrons of the church, so that those going to school could be paid.[7]

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[6] Richardson, National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race, 222; Ovington, Half A Man, 119; McGuinn, 253; Blascoer, 56-58; Age, May 29, 1937.

Ambitious leisure-time programs were not limited, however, to the more elite congregations or to those supported by outside finances. Even Union Baptist, the poorest of the congregations, became a social center and attempted to extend its influence through the entire San Juan Hill area. Opposed theologically to dancing and theatre, Reverend Sims did encourage an active choir, a literary society and an industrial school, and he formed clubs to carry on the work of the church. Mt. Olivet Baptist boasted a wide range of organizations and activities including Baptist Training Union, Boy Scouts, Busy Bee Club, Carnation Club, Choir, Church Aid Society, Dorcas Missionary Circle, Junior Dorcas Missionary Circle, Girl's Culture Club, Ladies Auxiliary, Sunrise Praying Band, Men's Usher Board, Women's Usher Board, Mother's Club, Beacon Light Club and the Girl Scouts.[8]

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[7] McGuinn, 253; Blascoer, 49-50; Age, May 14, 1908, January 21, 1909, August 3, 1916.

[8] Age, April 23, 1908, November 12, 1908; Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, passim.

The most active of all the churches was Abyssinian Baptist. Reverend Morris had encouraged the formation of clubs to involve the individual members more in the affairs of the church, and this work was aggressively pushed by Reverend Powell, who was more concerned than most pastors with questions of church administration and individual involvement. It was Powell's goal to organize the church so that the talents of the many members could be put to good use and so that the members would feel that they really belonged to the large church. Powell recognized that the larger churches were losing members to the storefronts because individuals felt lost and unnoticed in a congregation with a membership over 1,000. Powell's genius was in understanding the impersonality of the city and of large urban institutions, and in acting to alleviate it. He organized clubs such as the Friendly Society, which had as its responsibility to visit every sick member of the congregation, and the Highways and Hedges Society, which was to visit the community in search of new church members and those who had stopped attending. He exhorted the ushers to shake hands and be friendly with every person who attended services. He maintained that the unchurched Negroes in New York City would be reached "not by dwelling on their faults or by holding hell fire and brimstone under their noses," but by contacting them personally, making them feel wanted and showing them "Christianity makes a man happier and more useful." Powell also insisted on keeping adequate attendance and contribution records. The church paid a great deal of attention to the young people, holding a separate Children's Church every Sunday with services conducted by the pastor or his assistant. Abyssinian also had a debating society but took more pride in an excellent choir that gave regular concerts and served as an attraction for the Sunday services which were already enlivened by Reverend Powell's popular sermons.[9]

The ministers and their congregations were active in the formation and the support of the colored branches of the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. Reverend Charles T. Walker of Mt. Olivet had started the movement which led to the establishment of a separate branch for colored men in 1901, and Reverdy Ransom's wife was largely responsible for convincing the New York Y.W.C.A. Committee to give $100,000 toward the building of a separate colored women's branch in Harlem in 1912. The branch was named Emma Ransom House in her honor. The aim of the "Y's" was to become a kind of social center for the black community stressing not only the nurturing of the Christian spirit, but the improvement of the body through organized athletics and the improvement of the mind through lectures and discussions.[10]

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[9] Blascoer, 54; Age, July 5, 1906, June 29, 1911, September 21, 1911, September 19, 1912, April 17, 1913.

[10] Ransom, Pilgrimage, 203-205; Age, March 28, 1912, May 29, 1913.

When speaking about the role of the church as a leisure-time activity, the religious services themselves should not be neglected for they certainly, in part, served this purpose. Every church scheduled several religious services per week, including Sunday morning and evening services, Sunday school, Wednesday evening prayer meeting and Friday evening gospel singing. These services were enlivened by visits from religious personalities other than the pastor. The practice of exchanging pulpits for Sunday morning service, for instance, was widespread. A popular preacher like Powell or Ransom would sometimes preach three or four sermons each at a different church on one Sunday. A by-product of this practice was that the pastors became known throughout the community which strengthened their position as community leaders. During the revival season (January to Easter), churches held nightly services and often joined together to bring a famous evangelist to town for nightly meetings lasting up to a month.[11]

As well as putting people into contact with each other and providing something to do in leisure time, church activities also helped the socialization process by passing on news and providing a kind of community forum. The churches were the only large meeting houses owned by blacks themselves and so served as the logical places for public gatherings of interest to the entire black community, especially protest meetings. The churches were the places where most people found out what was happening and where they became acquainted with the issues affecting their lives. In this way the churches served as community newspapers and schools--as communication centers of the community. To a partially illiterate and pre-radio and television community, this role was extremely important and helps to explain why the ministers so often emerged as leaders of the community. Through regularly scheduled lectures, lyceums, debates and discussions,the churches provided an adult education program that covered a multitude of subjects.

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[11] Age, March 16, 1905, May 6, 1909.

The churches also served as a medium through which Negro businesses could be advertised. Clergymen did not hesitate to suggest specific businesses and products to their congregations in or out of the regular services; there were advertisements in the Sunday bulletins, and the church halls were often used by businesses for organizational or promotional purposes. Ministers were generally committed to the self-help philosophy and looked upon black-owned businesses as the best example of this doctrine. Then, too, businessmen often were a church's largest contributors and hardest workers. And, sometimes, as in the case of such companies as the Metropolitan Mercantile and Realty Company, the Afro-American Realty Company, the Real Estate Deposit and Investor Company, the Sims Union Realty Company, the Dillar-Brown Undertaking Company and the Wainwright Undertaking Company, ministers had a material investment in companies they advertised.[12]

Finally, as part of the socialization process, the churches were important in helping newcomers acclimate themselves to the urban society. Most ministers, especially Powell, stressed the necessity of searching out newcomers to the city and making them feel welcome in the large churches. Mt. Olivet and Union Baptist in their inception appealed directly to the need of Southern migrants for churches similar to those with which they were familiar in their rural past. In many ways the church was one of the familiar things to the migrant in a world full of strange and new phenomena. The church because it was familiar and therefore trusted was looked to for aid in adjusting in the first difficult years in Northern urban society. Thus, churches sometimes provided housing or more often helped find housing, furnished aid in finding employment and provided some vocational education. St. Cyprian's had the most active program along this line; St. Mark's also had an organized program; while the others did it on a more haphazard basis.[13]

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[12] Ibid., February 9, 1905, March 9, 1905, January 18, 1906, February 1, 1906, June 21, 1906, February 7, 1907, October 17, 1907, April 23, 1908, June 2, 1910, April 25, 1912..

It would seem, however, that in the area of housing, employment aid and vocational education, the churches tended to look to secular agencies for the primary activity, since these agencies could more readily tap financial sources in the white community. Still, ministers provided an important part of the leadership of these secular agencies. Reverend Brooks and Reverend Bishop were instrumental in helping to begin both the Committee for Improving the Industrial Conditions of Negroes in New York and the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, which combined in 1911 to form the Urban League. Brooks, Bishop and Powell were active members of the New York Urban League and served on the National Executive Board in its early years. One of the primary functions of the Urban League as well as its predecessors was to aid new migrants. They had agents in the South to help arrange transportation. Boats and trains were met in the North and help was given in finding housing and jobs, meeting friends and getting an education. Reverends Brooks and Bishop were also active in support of the evening industrial training school sponsored by the New York City Board of Education and administered by the Negro educator, William L. Bulkley.[14]

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[13] Blascoer, 49-50; Griffin, 75-76; Age, May 14, 1908.

[14] Scheiner, 59-60; National League for the Protection

The churches of the early twentieth century also served their communities as welfare agencies, ministering to the needs of the sick, hungry and unemployed and attempting to cleanse the community of what were felt to be the causes of this social destitution. The church "must go into the highways and hedges during the week, caring for the sick, the wounded, the distressed and all that are needy," said A. Clayton Powell. And every church considered here did have funds available and groups organized to dispense poor relief, to care for the sick and to find jobs for the unemployed. The most common idea was the mutual aid society, a group insurance plan whereby members paid a small amount weekly and received specified payments if they became sick or lost their jobs. Several churches employed visiting nurses. St. Mark's began a fund to build an old persons home. Bethel maintained a home for young women. St. Cyprian's and Union had day nurseries and St. Cyprian's a milk station. All provided poor relief, sometimes in money, more often in kind, to anyone in need, not necessarily a member of the church. St. Mark's and St. Philip's

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of Colored Women, Annual Report, 1910 (New York, 1910); L. Hollingsworth Wood, "The Urban League Movement," Journal of Negro History, IX (April, 1924), 120; National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, Annual Report, 1910-1911 (New York, 1911); National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, Annual Report, 1912-1913 (New York, 1913); National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, Annual Report, 1914-1915 (New York, 1915); National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes, Annual Report, 1919 (New York, 1920); Age, July 12, 1906, July 8, 1909, November 25, 1909, January 27, 1910, October 9, 1911.

were by far the largest donors. Ministers were active in support of secular welfare agencies such as the Committee for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, the Children's Aid Society, the Orphan Asylum and the Urban League and its predecessors.[15]

Sources make it difficult to determine just how effective these churches were in their battle against poverty, but given the nature of the urban community and the relative poverty of the churches, it is understandable that the combined attempts by all the churches studied here fell short of alleviating the problem generally. Partly because of the lack of funds to aid all of the poor directly, ministers spent a great deal of time endeavoring to cleanse the community of what they saw as the main causes of poverty.

For the most part these cleansing attempts centered on the fundamentalist Protestant sins--drinking, smoking, dancing, gambling, theatre-going and prostitution. Crusade after crusade was waged against these evils and against the purveyors of the evils who preyed on the weakness of the young and poor in the disorganized ghetto. "Thousands of our young men and women," said Reverend Charles S. Morris of Abyssinian in 1906, "who might otherwise have been a help to society and to the race, have been drawn into these cesspools of vice, and their lives and characters blasted forever." After a revival led by Morris, his assistant pastor, William J. Brown, and 10 church members "sallied out against two dance halls which were running at full blast in the neighborhood and besought the unregenerate to come into the fold." The pastor and his followers were jailed for disturbing the peace. Reverend D. W. Wisher "was attacked as he was passing the corner of Fifth Avenue and One Hundred Thirty-fifth Street by a woman of questionable character, because of the stand he took against immorality in flats occupied by respectable families." Reverend Powell spoke of being greeted daily in his first years in New York by insults from his neighbors on Forty-second Street because of his campaign against organized vice.[16]

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[15] A. Clayton Powell, "The Significance of the Hour," Palestine, and Saints in Caesar's Household, 101-102; Ovington, The Walls Came Tumbling Down, 39; "The Negro in the Cities of the North," Charities, XV (October 7, 1905), 5; Griffin, 75-76; Blascoer, 56-58; McGuinn, 253; Age, August 13, 1908, April 26, 1909, December 7, 1911, April 17, 1913, May 8, 1913, August 3, 1916.

The ministers were greatly concerned with the nonchalant attitude of the city officials, especially the police, toward what they felt to be such lawless behavior. Urging their own people to obey the law, they felt compelled to criticize lawmakers and law enforcement officials for their lack of diligence. Powell actively supported John Purroy Mitchel for mayor in 1909,because Mayor Gaynor had turned a deaf ear to his pleas for city help for a campaign against vice in the Tenderloin. Reverend Brooks was very critical of law enforcement after the riots of 1900 and 1905 and accused the police of neglecting their duties toward white criminals while arresting and mistreating innocent blacks.[17]

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[16] Age, February 22, 1906, March 29, 1906, September 16, 1909; Powell, Against the Tide, 55-59.

There is no doubt that the crusade on the part of the ministers against sin was blunted by the constant reoccurrence of cases of immorality among the ministry. The Age throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century carried an a zealous campaign against "sexual immorality, drunkenness and dishonesty of Negro ministers," replete with front-page stories and angry editorials. Most of these cases had to do with little-known storefront preachers, but their actions sullied the reputation of all Negro ministers. The Age was also especially critical of the A.M.E. and A.M.E.Z. bishops whose ranks, the paper said, were full of "cads and nincompoops...who bribe, cheat and steal."[18]

Reverdy Ransom, influenced by his settlement house experience in Chicago, tried to meet society's misfortunate on their own terms. Rather than preaching to them from afar like outcasts, Ransom opened the Mission of St. Simon the Cyrene in 1913 on West Thirty-first Street which was open to all no matter their color or station in life and attempted to help the poor meet their everyday needs. "Somehow the best of us," Ransom said, "must come closer to the worst of us and help that submerged part of us to get on speaking terms with God." The mission offered meals, a place to sleep, recreation and help toward rehabilitation. Ransom's mission, however, never received much support or even encouragement. The A.M.E. Annual Conference supported him only minimally and his successor at Bethel accused him of trying to draw members away from Bethel. No other ministers followed his example and its total effect was minimal.[19]

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[17] Powell, Against the Tide, 55-59; Lewis, Adam Clayton Powell, 16; Scheiner, 125-126.

[18] Age, July 16, 1908, May 20, 1909, August 26, 1909, October 7, 1909, October 21, 1909, May 5, 1910, May 19, 1910, December 15, 1910, April 13, 1911.

Ransom was also one of the few ministers who at times suggested that a great deal of the trouble seen first hand in the black ghetto of New York City could be the result of a malfunction in the capitalistic system. Most of the other ministers had a strong faith in the principles of self-help and petty capitalism, which encouraged them to believe that once the worst evidences of sin were eradicated, the most able in society would be free to succeed and the lazy and ignorant would be left to minimal private charity.

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[19] Ibid., August 14, 1913, September 4, 1913, June 11, 1914, June 3, 1915; Ransom, Pilgrimage, 26-34; Reverdy Ransom, "The Editor's Vision and Task in the Black Tenderloin," A.M.E. Church Review, XXX (October, 1913), 149-151.

One would have to conclude that in this early period, despite the great amount of activity on behalf of social welfare and despite this rather optimistic faith in the system, little headway was made against the ever increasing problems of poverty and social disorganization. The forces causing the evils were too great for the puny funds and political power of the black ministers and their churches of the early twentieth century.[20]

The third general role played by the churches and their ministers was that of providing the community an opportunity to develop leadership skills and an independent point of view. The churches stimulated the community to develop home-grown leadership and in many cases provided the leadership for social and political action within the community. One of the by-products of the proliferation of voluntary organizations in each church was that leadership and administrative experience was spread over a good number of people. But, more than that, the fact that the churches were controlled and run by blacks themselves provided experience in leadership of large organizations with real social power. The ministers, their assistants and the lay officials assumed responsibility for organizations that exceeded 1,000 in membership, that boasted yearly budgets approaching and surpassing $10,000 and that owned a sizeable portion of Manhattan real estate. And, nationally, the black-controlled A.M.E. and A.M.E.Z. denominations administered powerful organizations. The A.M.E.Z. Church claimed 184,000 members and the A.M.E., 494,000 in 1906. In 1903, the A.M.E.Z. had 2,900 ministers and property worth almost $5,000,000. The A.M.E. had 16,828 ministers and property worth $10,000,000. The quadrennial receipts of the A.M.E. Church in 1912 amounted to almost $800,000. "The A.M.E. Church and kindred denominations," said Reverdy Ransom in 1915, "are about the only fields left to the American Negro where he can show his capacity for self-government or freely exercise his talents or abilities and find an outlet for his aspirations and ambitions."[21]

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[20] Ransom, Pilgrimage, 226-234; Ransom, The Disadvantages and Opportunities of the Colored Youth, 36.

The churches themselves were the best example of what was one of the principal general messages of New York's black ministers--self-help and racial pride. The churches, even those connected with a white-controlled denomination, had developed virtually on their own as separate institutions and had thus produced a large amount of racially conscious black leadership. It was natural for leaders produced in this manner to encourage similar ideas in other fields and to concentrate primarily on areas that could bring substantial improvement in the material existence of American blacks. Hence, over and over the ministers encouraged blacks to form businesses for themselves and to educate themselves to the greatest extent possible. If large numbers could be encouraged along these lines, the numbers able to exercise leadership would greatly increase and substantially enhance the future possibilities of the race. Leading ministers including Brooks, Bishop and Gilbert were active in the National Negro Business League, the organization founded in 1900 by Booker T. Washington to encourage Negro-owned businesses. Though the League did aid in exchanging information and beginning new business, its prime function was to spread the gospel of race salvation through business, a gospel that heavily emphasized the necessity of patronizing black-owned businesses. The ministers and their churches were also active in aiding in the education of the young people of the community. Individual churches often supported young men in colleges and contributed to the general support of black colleges. The A.M.E., A.M.E.Z. and National Baptist Convention all supported a large number of colleges and secondary schools, especially in the South.[22]

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[21] Johnson, Johnson and Palmer, 269; George Singleton, The Romance of African Methodism: A Study of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (New York, 1952), 185; W. E. B. DuBois, ed., The Negro Church; Report of a Social Study Made under the Direction of Atlanta University (Atlanta, 1903), 123-133; Age, July 4, 1907, October 24, 1907, July 29, 1909, March 16, 1911, May 20, 1915.

The ministers themselves provided the leadership for the questions both local and national that concerned the

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[22] Meier, 124-127; DuBois, ed., The Negro Church, 123-153; Age, April 25, 1907, January 21, 1909, May 20, 1909, August 18, 1910, August 25, 1910.

Negro community in New York City. It was the leading clergymen that molded the opinion and organized the community on issues of immediate concern. Being leaders of institutions outside of white political and economic control, ministers had more freedom than any other of the potential race leaders as well as the support of the Negro mass. They were, therefore, expected to concern themselves with the political and social issues that concerned the community as a whole. In this early period, the concern was mainly with such political issues as the demand for equal treatment under the law and for the right to vote. It was generally felt that if treated fairly and allowed to develop along the lines of free opportunity the Negro could raise himself without help to a position of social and economic respectability. Again, there was a great emphasis upon self-help and a great faith in laissez-faire capitalism.

. The first serious attempt in the twentieth century to organize the New York black community around a political issue came after the serious race riot in 1900, when the Citizens' Protective League was formed to protest the treatment blacks received at the hands of the police. New York ministers played an important part in the formation and activity of the League. William H. Brooks of St. Mark's took the lead in forming the organization and was elected its president. Reverends Cutyner of Mother Zion, Walker of

Mt. Olivet, Thompkins of St. James and Bishop Derrick also joined and worked for the League. These and other ministers raised the issues pressed by the Citizens' Protective League in their regular sermons. At a large mass meeting in Carnegie Hall and from several pulpits, Negroes were advised to arm themselves as the only means of self-defense. Reverend Brooks, however, took the position that most could be gained by using the legal channels of protest. "We must be calm and law-abiding and we will win," he told the audience of 5,000 at Carnegie Hall in September. He, therefore, urged using the League to press for an investigation of the riot and the police actions and to provide legal aid for Negroes who wished to bring suit against the city for personal injuries and property damages incurred during the riot. Though the protest gained no official condemnation of the police or legal settlements against the city, it did serve to unite the black community in opposition to Tammany Hall, which was generally held responsible for the riot and for the actions of the police. Derrick and Brooks campaigned actively for Seth Low in the mayoralty campaign of 1901 using against the Democrats the slogan "Remember the Riots."[23]

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[23] Scheiner, 121-127, 195; Citizens' Protective League, Story of the Riot (New York, 1900); J. A. Rogers, "The Race Riot of August 1900 in New York City," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--History of Negroes

Again in 1905, a riot between blacks and whites erupted, this time in the San Juan Hill district, and ministers led by Brooks, Gilbert and T. W. Henderson of Bethel were in the forefront of the protest. The Citizens' Protective League was reconstituted and angry sermons were preached from black pulpits. The issue was again police brutality against the Negro. Some began to argue that blacks should have a hand in administering and enforcing the law so as to insure more equitable treatment. Reverend Henderson urged the formation of the Colored Man's Municipal Association to press for more black office-holding. He deplored the lack of black policemen in New York by contrast with Chicago and Philadelphia. "In the past," he said in a sermon in 1905, "we have done our full share of voting, but have we had any share in administering the affairs after the elections? In Chicago there are between two and three hundred colored policemen, in Philadelphia nearly two hundred, while in New York we have not one."[24]

Reverdy Ransom took up this issue later during his ministry at Bethel A.M.E. Church. "Negroes pay taxes through excessive rents, and directly through ownership of much property," he told his congregation in 1909. "Yet

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in New York" (Schomburg Collection); Ottley and Weatherby, 167-168; James Weldon Johnson, Black Manhattan (New York, 1930), 129.

[24] Age, August 10, 1905, September 21, 1905, June 7, 1906.

upon the police force, the fire department, the parks, etc., we are practically without representation." Ransom asked the reform administration of Mayor Mitchel to provide more jobs for blacks, but the effort had little success. "The fusion or reform administrations have had small use for our people." said Ransom. "What we want is not a pat on the back and an election day cigar, but hundreds of thousands of dollars of the city's money, for services performed as employees of various departments." Having already broken with the Republican Party nationally, Ransom called on Negroes to support the Democrats locally because they were more willing to dispense patronage to blacks. **Although this was not, as Ransom later boasted,** the first break of Negroes away from the Republican Party in New York City, it was important because a minister of Ransom's prestige was advocating the break.[25]

Despite the work of the Citizens' Protective leagues and the ministers, unfair treatment by municipal officials, especially the police, remained a prime complaint of the black community throughout this period and the ministers continued to lead in voicing this complaint. There was, for instance, a mass meeting in 1911 to demand better police protection and to protest attacks on Negroes. This meeting was organized by a committee that included Brooks,

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[25] Ibid., August 5, 1909, October 21, 1909; Ransom, Pilgrimage, 215-216.

Powell, Ransom, Sims, Richard M. Bolden of Mother Zion, William R. Lawton of St. James and William P. Hayes of Mt. Olivet.[26]

New York's ministers were not reticent about speaking out on issues of national as well as local concern to the race. In these early years of the twentieth century, American Negroes were nominally under the political leadership of Booker T. Washington, and certainly the great majority of the leading ministers in New York generally acknowledged his pre-eminence. Yet, discontent with the Washington philosophy and leadership was evident among some of the more militant ministers. This discontent was little more than an undertone at first, but the coincidence of two events in the late summer of 1906--President Theodore Roosevelt's dismissal without honor of an entire battalion of Negro soldiers involved in a riot in Brownsville, Texas, and the Atlanta race riot--gave a new meaning to the demands of the militants. While Washington and his supporters called for moderation from blacks, white mobs were attacking Negroes and the President was engaging in what even Senator Benjamin Tillman called "executive lynching." The Brownsville incident was especially galling to black leaders because Roosevelt had been considered a good friend of the race, a symbol of a new spirit of equality.

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[26] _Age_, June 8, 1911.

After Roosevelt's order dismissing the troops, even those ministers who had long followed Washington's lead criticized the President. Mt. Olivet, St. Mark's, St. James and Abyssinian churches held protest services in honor of the dismissed soldiers on Thanksgiving Day. Reverend Brooks called Roosevelt a "political trickster" and a "prevaricator." Reverend Morris, who had said only a month earlier after the Atlanta riots that "this is the time to be temperate," warned that the Negro would "smite with unforgiving condemnation the next Presidential candidate of the Republican Party." The incidents helped erode Washington's carefully constructed alliance with the Republican Party and led directly to the much larger defection of the Negro vote from the Republicans in the election of 1908.[27]

In this election the black ministry of New York was split. Reverdy Ransom anticipated the 1908 Presidential campaign when he said in February: "I advise my people to oppose the present dictator in Washington, and if Roosevelt or any one he dictates is put on the ticket, I shall not hesitate to bolt it." Reverend Jacobs of Brooklyn's Fleet Street A.M.E.Z. Church already had asserted that "the election of Secretary Taft would mean a repetition of the Roosevelt Square Deal for the Negro, as he showed himself too weak to stand in connection with the dismissal of the Negro soldiers from the army." Bishop Walters advocated opposing Taft because of the Brownsville incident and argued that the Negro would be better off if his vote were split between Republicans and Democrats rather than slavishly tied to one party. In Walters' opinion, the Republicans had drifted away from their earlier principles because they were so sure of the Negro vote. There was now so little difference between the parties on the race issue that the Negro should cast his vote with the party that could give him the most in terms of immediate help.[28]

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[27] John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans (3rd edition, New York, 1967), 441-444; Age, October 18, 1906, October 25, 1906, November 22, 1906, December 6, 1906, December 13, 1906, February 14, 1907, September 26, 1907.

Other than Ransom, Walters and Jacobs, however, the leading ministers generally supported Taft in 1908. Despite the recent disappointments, voting for the party of Tillman, Hoke Smith and J. K. Vardaman was still virtually unthinkable. New York's black clergy were committed to the doctrine of equal political rights throughout the nation, and it was difficult to square this commitment with support of a party whose members in the South were calling for repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment. Bishop Derrick was the most active in Republican politics but Taft received the endorsements of Gilbert, McMullen, Morris, Bishop, Henderson and Butler.[29]

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[28] Age, August 29, 1907, February 20, 1908; Star of Zion, September 10, 1908, September 24, 1908; Clement, 18; Alexander Walters, "Reason for Division of Negro Vote," unidentified clipping, in Gumby Collection (Columbia University); Walters, My Life and Work, 177.

The militancy of New York's black ministers increased after the election of 1908, especially in the speeches of Ransom and Walters and in connection with the formation of the N.A.A.C.P. Washington's gradualism and his acceptance of separation of the races were attacked by the militants as not only idealistically but practically wrong. Acceptance of second-class citizenship now, no matter what the reason, meant that blacks were concurring in their own oppression. Reverdy Ransom summed up the radical opposition to Washington in a speech made in Boston in 1911 to celebrate the centennial of the birth of Charles Sumner.

> It is not true that the Negro and the white man can be as one in the things that relate to industry and business relations and yet in all other things be as separate as the fingers on the hand....There can be no harmony or equity between the races when they are one only in the things that relate to the purely physical side of life, but separate in all of those broader and more complex relations of intercourse where human life at its best really begins.[30]

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[29] Age, December 12, 1907, February 6, 1908, April 30, 1908, May 14, 1908, June 4, 1908, October 8, 1908, October 29, 1908.

[30] Reverdy Ransom, Charles Sumner: A Plea for the Civil and Political Rights of Negro Americans (Boston, 1911), 5.

Ransom told his own congregation in 1911 that the responsibility was theirs for acquiescing to the loss of their rights and that, therefore, the responsibility was also theirs for getting their rights back.

> But the negroes themselves are largely to blame for the contempt in which they are held and the impunity with which their liberties and their lives may be invaded. Sheriffs, mayors, courts, governors will not take seriously into account the interests of a people who have lost or surrendered the right to retaliate or call them to account at the ballot box.[31]

To Walters, Jim Crow laws were "a badge of inferiority, a stigma upon the race," that had to be opposed everywhere because the "northern negro is not free so long as he has to be a slave whenever he goes to South Carolina." Though most of the leading ministers did not agree with the strong criticism of Washington, there was general agreement with the idea that the main emphasis should be on political equality and the achievement of an unsegregated society. Blacks were anxious to be accepted without limitation in areas where they were confident that they could prove themselves competent and therefore belie the theories of white supremacy. Just as in boxing, if Jack Johnson won the heavyweight championship, so "in statesmanship, oratory, science, philosophy, business, some of the darker children of mankind forge to the front, what is to become of white supremacy?" Reverdy Ransom asked his congregation in 1909. "I do not believe Jack Johnson thinks of black supremacy in relation to his contest with Jeffries. It is simply a case of one man meeting another. The best man wins."[32]

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[31] _Age_, August 24, 1911.

New York's leading black pastors played an important part in the formation of the N.A.A.C.P. between 1909 and 1912. Originally an idea in the minds of five white radicals, Oswald Garrison Villard, Henry Moskowitz, Mary White Ovington, William English Walling and Charles Edward Russell, the group was first made biracial in 1909 with the inclusion of Bishop Walters and Reverend Brooks. Walters and Brooks were members of the Committee of Forty on Permanent Organization formed as a result of the 1909 conference called by the original group. In 1910, the organization became known officially as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Brooks and A. Clayton Powell were on the original Executive Committee and Walters on the General Committee elected at the 1910 conference. The first Board of Directors elected in 1912 included Brooks, Powell and Walters, and, in 1913, Shelton Bishop joined the Board. Although Reverdy Ransom spoke at the 1910 conference, he was never among the leadership nor even a very vigorous supporter of the N.A.A.C.P. It is likely that he sided with his friend, William Monroe Trotter, who was constantly at odds with the N.A.A.C.P. Trotter was especially critical of the fact that the organization was largely controlled and financed by whites. The N.A.A.C.P. in its early years, as Charles Flint Kellogg has shown, attempted to take a middle position between the conservatism of Washington and the radicalism of Trotter.[33]

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[32] Ibid., August 2, 1906, July 11, 1907, December 30, 1909; Star of Zion, July 11, 1907.

The election of 1912 further split the black ministers. Bishop Walters continued to advocate support for the Democrats, reasoning somewhat tortuously that if the Negro would help the white man in the South regain national political power denied him since 1860, the Southern white man, in gratitude, would reward the Negro with fair treatment. Walters had abandoned his earlier idealism for what seemed to be pure self-interested politics. After Wilson's election, he became the new President's unofficial adviser on Negro affairs and appointments and was made president of the National Colored Democratic League. Understandably, he was also the recipient of much criticism once Wilson fulfilled the worst expectations of black Americans by removing Negro officeholders and segregating public offices. Reverdy

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[33] Charles Flint Kellogg, *NAACP: A History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1909-1920* (Baltimore, 1967), 9-65, 297-308; Meier, 174-184; *The Crisis*, I (December, 1910), 3; *ibid*., II (September, 1911), 193.

Ransom, because of his link to Progressives like Jane Addams, supported Theodore Roosevelt until the convention when Roosevelt gave into demands of white Southerners for exclusion of some Negro delegates. For the rest of New York's leading black ministers, the combination of Roosevelt's timidity on the race question and Wilson's Southern heritage prompted reluctant and somewhat silent support of Taft. The actions of Wilson and the Democratic Congress of 1913 further solidified the prevailing conviction that only the Republican Party held any hope for the black man in America. As A. Clayton Powell said in 1914: "the negro throws away his vote if he votes for either the Democrats, Progressives, or Prohibition Party."[34]

Washington's death in 1915 brought an end to an era in Negro history. In New York City, an era was also ending as the geographical base of the black community had begun to move toward Harlem, accompanied by a mass influx of newcomers from the South and the West Indies. As early as 1910, the attention of leading black ministers was increasingly focused on problems relating to this environmental change and mass migration. These ministers had worked hard at the problems confronting the black community in the early twentieth century, much harder than most observers have given them credit for. This early effort unfortunately was undercut by the shift in location and by the huge influx of new migrants.

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[34] Walters, "Reason for Division of Negro Vote"; Reverdy Ransom, "Colonel Roosevelt, the National Progressive Party and the Negro," A.M.E. Church Review, XXIX (October, 1912), 154-161; Ransom, The Spirit of Freedom and Justice, 98-103; Age, March 23, 1911, August 8, 1912, August 15, 1912, August 29, 1912, September 26, 1912, November 14, 1912, December 5, 1912, March 13, 1913, May 29, 1913, August 14, 1913, August 6, 1914, October 29, 1914.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW COMMUNITY: THE LEADING CLERGYMEN AND THE MOVE TO HARLEM, 1910-1920

The attention of New York City's black ministers turned increasingly in the years following 1910 to the consequences of the rapid increase in numbers and the shift in location of black New Yorkers. Migration from the South and from the West Indies had been increasing since around 1870, but after 1910 it reached significant proportions in terms of both actual numbers and percentages.[1] The First World War provided a strong pull on blacks to migrate to the urban industrialized North. Because the European source of cheap and unskilled labor was virtually cut off with the beginning of World War I and because the Northern economy was stimulated by the wartime demand, employers in the

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[1] The table below shows the total Negro population in Manhattan for each census year from 1870 to 1920 as well as the actual and the percentage increase in each decade.

Year	Population	Increase in Decade Actual	Increase in Decade Per cent
1870	13,072	600	5%
1880	19,663	6,591	50
1890	23,601	3,938	20
1900	36,246	12,645	54
1910	60,534	24,288	67
1920	109,133	48,599	80

United States Census Office, *Eighth Census, 1860: Population* (Washington, 1864), 337; United States Census Office, *Ninth Census, 1870: Population,* I,51; United States Census Office, *Tenth Census, 1880: Population* (Washington, 1883), I, 422; United States Census Office, *Eleventh Census, 1890: Population* I, 471; United States Census Office, *Twelfth Census, 1900: Population,* I, 631; United States Census Office, *Thirteenth Census, 1910: Population,* I, 178; United States Census Office, *Fourteenth Census, 1920: Population* (Washington, 1922), III, 682.

North began to look to the large black population in the South to supply the needed unskilled labor.

This pull was exerted not only by the actions of employers but by the black community as well. Negro newspapers which in 1900 had discouraged emigration were in 1915 singing the praises of the life to be lived in the Northern cities. And ministers were speaking of the "exodus of colored men and women to the North" as "inspired by the Almighty God," especially as a result of the progressive worsening of race relations in the South. After the Atlanta riot of 1906, Reverdy Ransom in a speech advised his Northern brethren to assist emigration from the South as newcomers from Europe were helping the oppressed Europeans to migrate:

> So we say to our people today, rise and emigrate from Georgia, for Hoke Smith and his mob will seek your life. We say to our people rise and depart from Mississippi for Vardaman seeks your destruction. Leave the rice swamps of the Carolinas while Tillman boasts of your destruction and murder in the Senate of the United States. Millions of Negroes can find liberty, prosperity and peace in the states east, west and north....
>
> If the European emigrants a short time after their arrival here, can assist in transporting millions of their countrymen to these shores, we can also advise, assist and encourage millions of our people to leave the South.[2]

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[2] Age, October 16, 1920; Ransom, The Spirit of Freedom and Justice, 121. There are a number of accounts of the Negro migration to the North of which the most exhaustive are Louise V. Kennedy, The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward; Effects of Recent Migrations to Northern Centers (New York, 1930) and Emmett J. Scott, Negro Migration During the War (New York, 1930).

Because of the resulting increase, Negroes were unable to find enough housing in the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill sections and were forced to settle elsewhere in ever larger numbers. By 1920, the locus of the black community in Manhattan had shifted almost entirely to Harlem. Thus, between 1910 and 1920, the ministers of New York's leading black churches were faced with the necessity of responding to the needs of a large and continuously growing number of urban newcomers and with the necessity of changing the location of their churches in order to serve adequately these newcomers as well as older members.

As early as 1900, the black migration to New York City had begun to put pressure upon existing housing facilities in the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill. Because of limited economic resources and because of racial prejudice, Negroes were severely restricted when they searched elsewhere for adequate housing. The stepped-up search for more living space coincided with a break in the speculative building boom that had taken place in Harlem in the years before the completion of the Lenox Avenue subway line to One Hundred Forty-fifth Street. As a result of the break, Harlem, which up to this time had been generally a white upper-middle-class residential area, developed a surplus of rentable apartments. Real estate developers were faced with financial ruin in the form of half-empty apartment houses and brownstones. Financial necessity, then, combined with the work of aggressive black realtors and race leaders and the desperation of a people in search of adequate housing overcame the stubborn resistance of the white residents to blacks buying or renting property in Harlem. By 1920, nearly 75,000 Negroes, 70 percent of Manhattan's black population, were living in Harlem.[3]

Black ministers in New York City, who already had spent a good deal of their time and the resources of their churches attempting to improve the quality of life in Manhattan's black ghettoes, were quick to respond to these new developments. St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, led by Reverend Hutchens Bishop, was the earliest to move physically to Harlem. Located far downtown on Twenty-fifth Street and owning property in the area being cleared for Penn Station, St. Philip's was interested in relocating in Harlem, an area considered in 1909 to be a fashionable location for blacks. St. Philip's was also searching for a profitable investment for the money realized through the sale of its Thirtieth Street property. In 1909,the church sold its edifice on Twenty-fifth Street for $140,000 and attempted to purchase the property of a white congregation, the Church of the Redeemer Protestant Episcopal on One Hundred Thirty-sixth Street, offering $50,000. Church of the Redeemer refused to sell to St. Philip's since it was a member of a so-called Covenant Block and felt "morally bound" to honor an agreement not to sell any property to Negroes. St. Philip's instead built a new church on property purchased personally by Reverend Bishop on One Hundred Thirty-third Street. The cost of the land and the new building amounted to $255,000. There were two ironical aspects of this story. Father Bishop purchased the property on One Hundred Thirty-third Street in his own name because he could pass for white. Those who sold him the property assured him: "Negroes would never live on One Hundred Thirty-third Street." The Church of the Redeemer finally sold its property through a white woman to Mother Zion Church in 1914 for $22,000.[4]

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[3] A survey made by the Land Utilization Committee of the New York Building Congress indicated there were in 1920, 73,953 Negroes living in an area bounded by One Hundred Tenth Street on the south, One Hundred Fifty-fifth Street on the north, Park Avenue on the east and Amsterdam Avenue on the west. Age, June 2, 1934. The story of the movement of the black population into Harlem is told in Osofsky, 3-123.

St. Philip's disposed of its Thirtieth Street property in 1911 for $450,000 and purchased a row of 10 six-story apartment houses on One Hundred Thirty-fifth Street for $620,000. These apartments had previously been open to white tenants only, but St. Philip's, through a black real estate firm, Nail and Parker, began immediately to replace the

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[4] Age, June 24, 1909, December 9, 1909, January 29, 1914; Osofsky, 116; Waring Cuney, "Interview with Reverend Shelton Bishop"; E. F. Dycoff, "A Negro City in New York," Outlook, CVIII (December 23, 1914), 950.

the white tenants with black. Originally, the apartments were to be rented only to members of the church, but this restriction was later relaxed. The church now had an investment policy which afforded it a steady income apart from Sunday collections and which worked for the good of the race in opening up apartments at reasonable rents to black families in areas previously closed to them. In 1921, it was estimated that the total value of the church's property amounted to more than $1,000,000 and returned a yearly rental income of over $100,000. There still remained, however, a mortgage of approximately $300,000 on the property.[5]

Bethel A.M.E. Church became the second established black church to move to Harlem when it bought property on One Hundred Thirty-second Street in 1912 and held its first service there in May, 1914. The move caused some dissension within the congregation and much criticism of the new pastor, Benjamin William Arnett, Jr., who succeeded Reverdy Ransom in this pulpit in 1912. Arnett was the son of Bishop Benjamin William Arnett who had had his differences with the Bethel congregation in 1905 and had resigned as bishop of the New York Conference because of the dispute. The younger Arnett, who was born in 1866 and graduated from Wilberforce, had served churches in Ohio, Illinois,

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[5] Age, March 30, 1911, January 29, 1914, July 16, 1921; Dycoff, 950; The Crisis, I (May, 1911), 5.

Brooklyn and Queens and had taught at several small colleges in the South. Some in the Bethel congregation considered his appointment to the pastorate of one of the denomination's leading parishes due more to nepotism than to any particular intellectual or spiritual distinction. Arnett also suffered from comparison with his predecessor. In contrast to the ebullient Ransom, Arnett hardly ever spoke out on questions other than theological and seemed to take no interest in the wider local or national black community. The fact that Ransom had not left New York but remained to form the Mission of St. Simon the Cyrene and to edit the A.M.E. Church Review also bothered Arnett. He accused Ransom of attempting to undermine his authority at Bethel and of trying to split the congregation by setting up the mission in the Tenderloin. When Arnett chose to take the costly step of moving Bethel to Harlem, which meant committing the church to a sizeable debt, he did not get unanimous support from his congregation. He was replaced in 1917 by Reverend A. R. Cooper who served until 1920. Cooper was also a quiet and relatively obscure figure in the Harlem community.[6]

As early as 1843, Mother Zion Church had established a mission on One Hundred Seventeenth Street to serve the handful of blacks then residing in Harlem. The existence of the mission in Harlem complicated the question of whether or not to relocate the mother church there and led to several years of serious dispute within the congregation. The dispute apparently began in 1908 when J. H. McMullen, pastor at Mother Zion, announced his desire to leave the mother church in order to assume the leadership of the Harlem mission church. McMullen felt that the struggling mission needed his help more than the established mother church. Bishop J. W. Hood complied with his request, and upon his departure Richard Manuel Bolden was assigned to Mother Zion. In 1909, McMullen accused Mother Zion of providing no financial support or "spiritual encouragement" to his difficult task in Harlem. The following year, Mother Zion instituted an unsuccessful suit through the state courts claiming title to the Harlem Zion property. The A.M.E.Z. denomination declared Harlem A.M.E.Z. Church to be a separate and independent congregation, and, in 1911, a new edifice was constructed and its name was changed to Rush Memorial A.M.E.Z. Church. McMullen was transferred in 1913 and was succeeded by Reverend Aetius Albert Crooke who remained until 1920.[7]

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[6] Age, August 31, 1905, October 5, 1905, May 8, 1913, May 29, 1913, May 21, 1914, June 11, 1914, July 23, 1914, July 30, 1914; The Christian Recorder, July 20, 1905; Wright and Hawkins, 27.

Mother Zion, remaining at its Eighty-ninth Street location, suffered difficulties partly because of the ultimate competition of the Rush Memorial Church in Harlem and partly because of dissension within the congregation centering around Reverend Bolden, who had succeeded McMullen as pastor. Bolden, born in Maryland in 1878, had moved to Providence, Rhode Island, before he was 18 to work as a servant. His white employer, impressed with his intelligence and character, provided him with the funds to attend Livingstone College in North Carolina. There, Bolden prepared himself for the A.M.E.Z. ministry. After graduation, he served churches in rural North Carolina, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and in Tarrytown, New York, before he was assigned to Mother Zion in 1909. The Mother Zion appointment was an important one for a minister so young, **but he** was not able to unite the disparate congregation.[8]

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[7] _Age_, August 12, 1909, October 28, 1909, July 7, 1910, August 10, 1911, June 19, 1913; Jonathan Greenleaf, _A History of the Churches of all Denominations in the City of New York from the First Settlement to the Year 1846_ (New York, 1846), 322.

By 1913, the dissension had developed to the point that a large part of the congregation was demanding Bolden's transfer. The key issue was the inability of Mother Zion to expand. Its membership had shrunk in the midst of the disputes over Harlem Zion and Reverend Bolden and in the face of a location north of the San Juan Hill and Tenderloin districts, but south of Harlem. Bolden, supported by part of the congregation, accused the trustees of the church of extravagance in their handling of the church finances. The trustees, supported by part of the congregation, accused Bolden of poor leadership in failing to attract new members. In 1913, New York Conference Bishop Josiah S. Caldwell transferred Bolden to Yonkers ostensibly because of his failure to increase the size of the church. The removal caused an uproar among Bolden's supporters at Mother Zion, and when the pastor refused to accept his new assignment and left on a European trip, about 500 of the Mother Zion congregation organized a separate congregation.[9]

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[8] Age, June 19, 1913, April 9, 1914, September 16, 1933, September 28, 1940; Mather, 29.

This separate congregation first named themselves the Emmanuel Religious and Industrial Association of Mother Zion Church and invited Bolden upon his return from Europe to lead them. In 1913, the Association incorporated as a separate church. In 1914, the church purchased a brownstone on One Hundred Thirty-fifth Street for use as its edifice and parsonage. Bolden spoke of having had "a revelation of the truth" instructing him to found a new sect based on his theories of "Emmanuelism." Throughout 1914, Bolden expounded his theories in a series of sermons printed in the Age. The new religion was essentially one that asked its adherents to commit themselves to the Holy Spirit and to let the Holy Spirit move one's life--"believers in him should strive for that power through being filled with the Holy

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[9] Age, July 4, 1912, July 11, 1912, June 19, 1913, July 10, 1913, October 23, 1913.

Ghost and endeavoring to live a holy life and obeying the holy will within them."[10]

Reverend Bolden displayed little interest in strengthening or enlarging his church or using it as an institutional center. He scoffed at the concept of the church as a social center or social uplift agency:

> The modern idea of the gospel as a social cult for a few pretended intellects or a demoralizing social uplift agency such as is seen in some Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations and some religious denominations which stress all kinds of attractions, paraphernalia, festivals, demoralizing activities and degenerating dances is misleading, erroneous and unrighteous.

He, however, did not draw back from politics or from any chance to be a spokesman for the race. As early as 1906, while assigned to a church in Tarrytown, Bolden had served as president of the Westchester County Colored Republican Club. He was twice an unsuccessful candidate for the State Assembly, in 1915 on the Progressive ticket and in 1922 on the Republican ticket. He was a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1928.[11]

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[10] Ibid., July 10, 1913, August 21, 1913, August 28, 1913, September 18, 1913, September 25, 1913, October 23, 1913, January 29, 1914, March 5, 1914, April 9, 1914, January 4, 1917, February 28, 1925.

[11] Ibid., August 15, 1912, July 17, 1913, October 2, 1913, October 11, 1917, October 18, 1917, September 27, 1919, July 22, 1922, July 29, 1922, May 16, 1925; Mather, 29; John Albert Morsell, "The Political Behavior of Negroes in New York City" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1950), 32.

As a race spokesman, Bolden was most conservative. He always accepted the premise that he was a colored man in a society controlled by white men. He chose not to oppose this reality. According to the _Amsterdam_, when the leader of the Nineteenth Assembly District, David Costuma, needed a Negro to speak against the nomination of a Negro on the Republican Party judiciary ticket, "he selected none other than the Reverend Dr. 'Emmanuel' Bolden, who in eloquent voice, told the colored folk assembled that 'we must be loyal to the party and not raise the race issue.'" In 1928, when Bolden's long time friend, Fred Moore, publisher of the _Age_, led a campaign for black leadership in the Republican organization in Harlem, Bolden supported the white leadership and the _Age_ attributed the following statement to him:

> Does Fred Moore think I'm a fool? He wants me to carry out his fight but I am not going to do it. The "niggers" get nothing except what the white people give them. These "niggers" talk about the white people, but the white people make them. What I get comes from the whites and I am not foolish enough to try fighting them. They made me, they made Fred Moore, and they made all the rest of the "niggers."[12]

By the 1920's, Bolden almost personified the fawning, platitudinous Negro minister so often caricatured by white society. He stands out, however, because he contrasted so markedly with most of the other clergymen in Harlem's established churches, men to whom this caricature certainly would not apply. Further, Bolden's leadership potential was steadily eroded as the size of the Emmanuel Church declined. In 1929, the church claimed only 300 members and was still holding services in the One Hundred Thirty-fifth Street brownstone. Bolden's position as a race leader, which he claimed until his death in 1940, rested almost entirely upon his stature among whites. Among blacks he commanded little respect and held little power.[13]

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[12] Richard M. Bolden, "An Open Letter to the American People," _The Colored American Review_, I (October 15, 1915), 3; _Amsterdam_, November 24, 1926; _Age_, February 25, 1928, March 3, 1928, March 10, 1928, September 15, 1928.

During the tenure of McMullen and Bolden, Mother Zion had begun to invest in real estate, buying a tenement house on Grove Street and two five-story apartment houses on One Hundred Thirty-eighth Street. The Harlem property was on a block which had previously been closed to black tenants by a covenant agreement. It was reported in 1913 that Mother Zion controlled property, including the church edifice, apartment houses, lots in New Jersey and cemetery plots, worth $275,000, but how much this property was mortgaged was not indicated. However, from the various accounts in the press it would appear that the mortgage on the property was considerable. The issue was raised several times during the pastorates of McMullen and Bolden.

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[13] Greater New York Federation of Churches, 15; Amsterdam, October 5, 1940.

In a survey taken in 1929, Mother Zion owed $165,000, about one-third of the estimated value of its property at that time.[14]

Bolden's successor at Mother Zion was James Walter Brown, who in 1913 was transferred from Rochester to head the strife-torn Mother Zion. At this point, the membership of the church had declined to about 350. Brown was the kind of leader the church had lacked for many years. He united the congregation and moved the church to Harlem in 1914, buying the property of the Church of the Redeemer on One Hundred Thirty-sixth Street. As a result of Brown's campaign to increase the membership, Mother Zion by 1920 claimed 3,000 members. His success was such that the A.M.E.Z. bishops discarded their traditional policy of limiting a pastor to six years at one church and permitted Brown to remain at Mother Zion until he was elected bishop in 1936.

Brown was born in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, in 1872 and attended Shaw University where he received his B.A. and Lincoln University where he received his S.T.B. After his graduation he served as an assistant principal of a colored normal school in North Carolina until 1903 when he accepted an A.M.E.Z. pastorate in Bethlehem,

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[14] *Age*, November 7, 1912, May 29, 1913; Greater New York Federation of Churches, 14.

Pennsylvania. In 1905,he was transferred to Rochester. Brown was a tireless and energetic worker and a dedicated participant in a large number of community organizations. He belonged to the Urban League, the N.A.A.C.P., the National Negro Business League, the National Equal Rights League, the Eureka Lodge, the Coachman's Union League, the Southern Beneficial League, the Sons and Daughters of North Carolina, the Hamilton Lodge, the Monarch Lodge, the Odd Fellows, the Clubman's Beneficial League, the Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, the Ministerial Brotherhood and the Harlem League Church Federation. He actively participated in the Y.M.C.A. program. Brown was an active Republican, twice being chosen as a delegate to National conventions. He was one of the original members of the Board of Directors of the Terry Holding Company, a black real estate firm investing in Harlem property. In 1917, he helped to organize the Silent Protest Parade against lynching and Jim Crow laws.[15]

Reverend Brown espoused a traditional theology bereft of its more emotional aspects, emphasizing the need for faith in Christ to insure a glorious eternal life. He saw the greatest danger to Harlem coming from "Sabbath desecration, neglect of church duties, Sunday games, gambling, immoral plays with improper dancing, and open pool halls." His thinking, though generally conservative, was race conscious. In his terms the best interests of the black community lay in free enterprise, voluntary organizations, Republican politics, Christian morality and a slow evolution toward equality. The church, he said, "stands for law and order, for good government and good morals. She is the greatest force in the world for righteousness. The influence means more for our security than a million policemen." Lincoln was a man to be admired because of "his thirst for knowledge, his sublime patience, his faith in God, his loyalty to friends, his faithfulness in the performance of duty, however humble the task." Once black people assimilated these values, they could create a viable community in New York and achieve on their own the equality so many had demanded. In preaching and acting upon this point of view, Brown was expressing the views most characteristic of the black leaders of the 1910's and 1920's.[16]

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[15] *Age*, January 29, 1914, December 14, 1916, August 2, 1917, September 20, 1917, January 26, 1918, June 8, 1918, May 7, 1921, February 23, 1924, May 14, 1927, February 8, 1936; Mather, 43; Joseph W. Boris, ed., *Who's Who in Colored America; A Bibliographical Dictionary of Notable Living Persons of Negro Descent in America* (7 Vols., New York, 1927-1950), I, 27; Richardson, *National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 224.

St. James Presbyterian Church, located on Fifty-first Street, also began to consider early in this second decade the possibilities of moving to Harlem. St. James had replaced C. Leroy Butler in 1911 with a "supply" pastor, William Rufus Lawton, a well-known resident of Brooklyn. Lawton, who was known for his lay activities rather than his pastoral work, was president of the Kings County Colored Republican Organization and worked in the Kings County district attorney's office. He was also a reporter for the Brooklyn Daily Standard Union and had preached at the Siloam Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn. Lawton was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1860 and graduated from Lincoln University and from its Divinity School. Before he came to New York he taught and preached in Lynchburg, Virginia. Lawton was apparently never very successful in winning the complete confidence of the St. James elders, as the continuation of his "supply" designation would indicate. He finally resigned in 1915 telling the press, "I will not suffer further indignities." Upon his resignation Lawton founded a new Presbyterian Church in Harlem which he called first the Washington Memorial and later renamed Rendall Memorial. The new church attracted some of the St. James congregation but remained a relatively insignificant institution. Lawton never achieved the prominence within the Harlem community that he had in Brooklyn. While he continued to work in Republican politics, he was seldom heard on public questions or active in community affairs.[17]

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[16] Age, December 3, 1921, February 16, 1924, July 15, 1925, November 9, 1929; James W. Brown, "The Return of the Angel," The Church Magnet, I (February, 1931), 3.

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[17] Age, October 24, 1907, October 2, 1913, March 4, 1915; Mather, 174; Boris, I, 120.

Before Lawton resigned, St. James purchased a lot on One Hundred Thirty-eighth Street for $53,000 and sold its property on Fifty-first Street for $43,000. To finance the building of a new church, the New York Presbytery loaned the congregation $40,000. St. James finally found a permanent pastor in 1916 when it called Francis M. Hyder to its pulpit. The new pastor was born in Tennessee in the early 1870's and graduated from Lincoln University in 1894 and from Lincoln Divinity School in 1897. While in New York, Hyder was successful in establishing St. James as an important part of New York City's black community. The congregation increased in size to the point that it had to acquire a new building in 1920. Hyder early demonstrated an interest in community affairs leading a movement in 1916 to protest the high rents being charged in Harlem. He strongly supported the Urban League and the Y.M.C.A. and worked to get some black political representation for Harlem in the State Assembly and the City Council. In 1917, he was one of four to represent the Harlem branch of the N.A.A.C.P. in presenting a petition to President Wilson protesting the court-martial of Negro soldiers involved in the Houston, Texas , riot. Hyder worked through the established channels--the Urban League, the N.A.A.C.P., the Republican Party, his own church--to effect progress towards what seemed to be his central objective as a Christian minister--an end to racial injustice.[18]

Not all of the downtown churches reacted as soon as St. Philip's, Bethel, Mother Zion and St. James to the migration to Harlem. Some held back until the 1920's and one did not move at all. Abyssinian Baptist remained downtown until the 1920's, despite pressure from its pastor. Reverend Powell had been one of the first to call attention to the great number of unchurched blacks in Harlem and to the need for religious institutions there. He with other ministers had sponsored joint revival meetings in Harlem as early as 1910. He also understood the future value of Harlem real estate and had purchased a private house for his own use and others for investment at bargain prices in the years after 1910. He sold his own house, for which he had paid $6,000, for $15,000 after holding it only six years. As early as 1911, he urged the Abyssinian congregation to move to Harlem, and, in 1916, he announced that he could sell the property on Fortieth Street for $240,000 and buy Harlem property at a bargain. But the membership opposed the the move, hoping that their midtown property would continue to appreciate in value. Powell was able, however, to convince his church to invest in real estate in Mid-Manhattan and Harlem both for the financial gain and as an aid to the race's need for housing. By 1913, Abyssinian owned apartment houses on Fortieth, Ninety-ninth and One Hundred Thirty-fourth streets. Powell wanted these to serve as model tenements for blacks. The Age noted that no disreputable tenants were allowed to rent in the buildings owned by the church. "One of the most stringent requirements is that no beer pails are allowed to be brought into any of the apartments."[19]

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[18] *Age*, June 25, 1914, June 1, 1916, August 10, 1916, November 9, 1916, December 28, 1916, October 18, 1917, September 20, 1919, September 27, 1919, December 13, 1919, April 24, 1920; James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way* (New York, 1933), 323; Richard J. Latimer, "History of St. James Presbyterian Church, New York City," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--The Church in New York." (Schomburg Collection).

Powell continued to press his church for the authority to relocate as it became more and more obvious that the center of the black New York community was moving to Harlem. Though still gaining in membership, Abyssinian's growth rate paled when compared with that of Mother Zion after its move in 1914; and finally in 1920, the church purchased six lots on One Hundred Thirty-eighth Street in anticipation of moving.[20]

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[19] Age, March 3, 1910, August 7, 1913, April 17, 1913; Powell, Against the Tide, 67-70; Ottley and Weatherby, 186; Hopper, 24; Ross, Spivack and Gelman, Post, March 27, 1956.

[20] Age, May 18, 1918, April 10, 1920. The annual report of the church released to the press indicated that 272 new members had joined Abyssinian in 1917. By contrast, Mother Zion reported that it was receiving 75 new members a month. Age, June 8, 1918.

Plans for the new building were developed and a tithing program for the building fund inaugurated. Powell began to hold nightly evangelistic meetings in a tent constructed on the One Hundred Thirty-eighth Street lots. He claimed he baptized 1,000 new members in the summer of 1920. When the plans for the new building were revealed to the congregation in 1921, a great outcry arose against the estimated cost of the new building--$300,000. Powell responded by announcing his resignation in December to devote "the rest of his life to evangelistic work, the lecture platform and the publishing of sermons." His resignation was rejected unanimously. In February, 1922, the Fortieth Street property was sold, and, in April, work was begun on the Harlem church according to the announced plans.[21]

Part of Powell's argument against those who opposed the move was that had the church taken his advice in 1916 it could have received $50,000 more for its Fortieth Street property and spent at least $100,000 less for its property and new church in Harlem. The property on Fortieth Street brought $190,000, but $90,000 of this went to pay off the mortgage on this property. By May of 1923, when the new building was finished, Powell had managed to accumulate another $174,000, mostly through the tithing program. The church, thus, needed to borrow only $60,000, a debt which was totally cleared by 1928. This meant that Abyssinian was one of the few churches in Harlem to greet the Depression without a mortgage on its property. Once the church was finished in 1923, Powell received a lifetime call to Abyssinian's pulpit.[22]

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[21] Ibid., April 10, 1920, December 17, 1921, February 4, 1922; Powell, Against the Tide, 67-78.

Although it remained on Fifty-third Street until the 1920's, St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church had been actively interested in the religious well-being of Harlem blacks as early as 1902. In that year the church established the Salem Memorial Mission in a Harlem storefront on One Hundred Twenty-fourth Street. The mission, which ministered to three women in its first service, grew rapidly, and, in 1910, with the financial aid of St. Mark's and the City Mission Society of the Methodist Church, it purchased property on One Hundred Thirty-third Street and became an independent congregation completely separate from St. Mark's. Salem soon rivalled its parent in size and in influence within New York's black community, with nearly 1,000 members by 1916. Salem's success was due in a large part to the ability of its pastor, Frederick Asbury Cullen. Cullen, who led Salem from its inception in 1902 through the 1930's, was the foster-father of Countee Cullen, a poet and leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's.

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[22] Powell, Against the Tide, 78-86, 159; Sydney H. French, "Abyssinian Baptist Church," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--The Church in New York" (Schomburg Collection); Age, May 26, 1923, January 14, 1928.

Reverend Cullen was born in Fairmount, Maryland, in the late 1870's, the youngest of 11 children. His father died when he was only two months old and the family remained poor, but young Cullen managed to attend elementary school in Fairmount and high school at Morgan College in Baltimore. After high school he taught school in Fairmount for two years and then returned to Morgan for theological training. He preached for two years in Maryland before coming to New York in 1902 to assume the duties at Salem Mission.[23]

At Salem, Cullen attempted to make his church an important institutional factor in the life of Harlem. As early as 1915, a survey of Negro social institutions noted the work of Salem along with that of the well-financed St. Philip's as the most active of the Harlem churches in providing facilities for the general betterment of the neighborhood. Reverend Cullen was especially interested in the young people of the community, feeling that they were essential to the community's progress. Salem, for instance, had the most elaborate athletic program of any of the churches, and Cullen was the first minister to work extensively with youth gangs. The nucleus of Salem's prize-winning athletic teams was a formerly destructive gang called "The Rats." Throughout his career Cullen was often consulted by social workers and city officials on youth problems. He always actively encouraged young people both vocally and financially to get as much education as possible. He adopted his son, Countee, orphaned at the age of 11, partly because he felt the exceptionally bright little boy deserved a chance to go to college. Countee Cullen graduated,a member of Phi Beta Kappa,from New York University, attended Harvard University Graduate School and studied in Paris on a Guggenheim Fellowship. Reverend Cullen also emerged as a leader in the struggle for equal rights. He was on the Executive Committee of the 1917 Silent Protest Parade and was one of four to present the parade's protest petition to President Wilson. In 1918, Cullen was elected president of the New York branch of the N.A.A.C.P. He was also one of those who began the movement that led to the candidacy of John M. Royall in 1913, the first Negro to run for alderman in New York City.[24]

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[23] Age, April 7, 1910, March 30, 1911, June 15, 1916, December 24, 1932; Amsterdam, November 21, 1936; Ferguson, 4-9.

In the pulpit Cullen added a native fundamentalist style to his progressive ideas on the role of the minister in community life. His services were not without an occasional shout or outbreak of emotionalism and his sermons tended to dwell heavily on the sins of gambling, drinking and prostitution. He stressed the importance of personal redemption and of cleansing oneself of the tendencies toward evil as the first steps toward personal salvation and community progress. Salem was the favorite meeting place for the extremely emotional services of G. Wilson Becton, a nationally known and controversial revivalist and close friend of Cullen. During the 1910's and 1920's, Frederick Cullen functioned as an important leader of Harlem blacks. He was so because he could reach and appeal to the black masses and lead them toward progressive social goals. Similar to many other leading black pastors in New York, he was conservative in his theology but progressive in his social philosophy.[25]

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[24] Harold Cooke Phillips, "The Social Significance of Negro Churches in Harlem" (M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1922), 27; Blascoer, 54,58; Ferguson, 10-36; Johnson, Along This Way, 323; Age, September 18, 1913, August 2, 1917.

Once devoid of the responsibility for Salem, St. Mark's turned its attention to the question of whether or not to relocate in Harlem. St. Mark's had only recently moved into a well-furnished edifice on Fifty-third Street and seemed to prosper as a "downtown" church for its more elite congregation. Reverend Brooks kept his interest in Harlem and aided in joint projects with other ministers to bring more of the services of the church to the district. In 1913, St. Mark's bought an apartment house on Lenox Avenue as an investment, hoping to resell it in the future at a profit large enough to finance a home for the aged. In

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[25] *Age*, March 30, 1911, June 15, 1916, August 5, 1933, October 7, 1933; *Amsterdam*, April 23, 1930, May 31, 1933; Blascoer, 58; Phillips, 27; Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York, 1940), 275-278; Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (New York, 1940), 84.

1920, St. Mark's purchased property on One Hundred Thirty-eighth Street for a church site and broke ground for a new edifice in 1922. Brooks had retired and died, however, before the church finally moved in 1926.[26]

The other Fifty-third Street church, Mt. Olivet Baptist, also delayed its move to Harlem until well into the 1920's. The delay cost the church in membership growth for Mt. Olivet had, since its beginning, appealed to the newcomers from the South and these newcomers were after 1910 settling mainly in Harlem. The survey taken in 1929 showed Mt. Olivet to be the tenth largest Negro church in Manhattan, while in 1902 it had been the largest. Mt. Olivet had gone through a bitter factional dispute prior to the resignation of Reverend Gilbert in 1911, and the new minister, William P. Hayes, apparently did not think that pressuring for a move to Harlem should be his first order of business. The membership did not push for it either. Once the First World War began, it became more difficult to engage the necessary contracting services to construct a new building and more difficult to dispose of the property downtown. After the close of the War, churches such as Mt. Olivet were trapped between the declining value of their downtown property and increasing construction costs and property values in Harlem. With all its assets invested in the Fifty-third Street edifice, the financial difficulties of moving were obvious. When the inevitable move finally did come in 1925, Mt. Olivet sold its property for $140,000 and bought the Seventh Day Adventist Temple on One Hundred Twentieth Street for $450,000, putting the congregation considerably into debt.[27]

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[26] Age, March 3, 1910, March 6, 1913, December 4, 1920, October 28, 1922, March 3, 1923, November 13, 1926; The Crisis, V (December, 1912), 62.

William Preston Hayes, who became Mt. Olivet's pastor in 1911, provided the troubled congregation with steady leadership until 1932. Hayes, born in rural North Carolina in 1881, the son of a Baptist preacher, was only 30 when he came to Mt. Olivet. He had attended Bennett College and Virginia Union Seminary, had taught at Virginia Union and had preached for nine years in Clarksville and Middlesex, Virginia. He quickly plunged into the social and political activities of the New York community. Reverend Hayes did not hesitate to preach on political issues or to use his pulpit as a vehicle for race protest. The themes of his sermons were familiar to Northern black audiences. He advocated support of the Republican Party but called on Republicans to return the support with legislation beneficial to the race. He encouraged the formation of black-owned businesses and exhorted his congregation to patronize them.

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[27] Greater New York Federation of Churches, 11; Age, December 6, 1924, January 3, 1925.

He was especially vehement in his condemnation of lynching in the South and in his insistence on a federal antilynching law. He spoke critically of President Wilson's willingness to go to war in Mexico or Russia over a violation of an American's rights, while "when a citizen of this country is lynched the Government regrets exceedingly it cannot become involved in State's Rights." "Now if Mr. Wilson is desirous of trying out his altruism, why does he not address himself to this gigantic home problem?" Upon the American entrance into the First World War, he called for the absolute and unquestioned patriotism of the Negro, but insisted that the government that fought for democracy abroad should see to it that the principle was applied at home.[28]

Reverend Hayes was much less active in welfare and community-betterment projects. Although there is no evidence that Mt. Olivet drew back from its beginning as an institutional church, there is also no evidence that Hayes pushed forward to any extent in this area. During a time when much was being done and even more being said about the institutional church and its activities, he was noticeably quiet. In general, his sermons exuded an optimism, a faith that in the long run God's chosen people would prevail. The optimism could shine through even in the midst of angry social criticism. Referring to the fact that 100 lynchings, without convictions, had occurred in the past year, he said in 1912, in a sermon:

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[28] *Age*, July 9, 1914, June 22, 1916, August 24, 1916, May 10, 1917, January 26, 1918, March 9, 1918, February 25, 1922; *Amsterdam*, August 8, 1928; Boris, I, 133; Richardson, *National Cyclopedia of the Colored Race*, 229.

> Notwithstanding these outrages, when we reflect that from a handful of slaves who landed in America in 1619, we have grown to be a race of 10,000,000 strong, with millions of dollars of property, with church edifices which compare favorably with those of any other race, and...the many other blessings...we are constrained to exclaim, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."[29]

Union Baptist remained on Sixty-third Street until 1926. Located in an area in which the black population continued to increase after 1910, Union reported in 1917 that its membership had reached 3,000,more than twice as many as were reported in 1912. Thus, during years when other churches were considering moving because of lagging membership growth, Union was still gaining in size and remained content in its location. Reverend Sims, while not pushing for a move to Harlem, however, recognized the importance of the rapid increase in black population there. He purchased a house on One Hundred Thirty-first Street in 1916 and established his residence there. Soon an advertisement appeared in the Age: "Why Not Marry and Be Happy? Reverend G. H. Sims, pastor of Union Baptist Church, has in his new residence at 131 W. 131st Street spacious parlors for marriage ceremonies." Sims thereby kept a base in both areas and remained in his position as a respected black leader despite the fact that his church was not located in the main community. Union's membership did begin to decline in the 1920's,and this prompted the purchase of property on One Hundred Forty-fifth Street in late 1926.[30]

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[29] Age, June 8, 1911, January 4, 1912.

Of the original nine churches,only one exhibited no interest at all in moving to Harlem. St. Cyprian's Protestant Episcopal Church had been the last of the downtown churches established, and it was located in the midst of the San Juan Hill district, an area that certainly needed the continuing influence of religious institutions. Moreover, St. Cyprian's, being officially administered by the Episcopal City Mission Society and established for the express purpose of ministering to the San Juan Hill district, was not free to move wherever congregation and minister wished. Reverend Johnson continued to devote his time and energy to the needs of his parish rather than to the New York black community as a whole. As the parish and the center of the black community drifted farther apart geographically, Reverend Johnson became less and less a part of that community.

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[30] *Ibid.*, May 11, 1916, June 15, 1916, November 22, 1917, January 22, 1921, July 24, 1926, October 30, 1926.

Also in this period a number of new churches sprang up in Harlem that developed in a short time into well-established churches. As has been pointed out, the Harlem missions--Harlem (Rush Memorial) A.M.E.Z. and Salem Methodist Episcopal--became independent churches during the period, and First Emmanuel developed from the split in the Mother Zion congregation. The most successful of the new churches formed in Harlem was Metropolitan Baptist which by the end of the 1920's was second only to Abyssinian in size. The origin of the Metropolitan congregation went back to 1897, when Reverend S. N. Epps came to New York and began holding services in Harlem in a house owned by the Baptist City Mission Society. Epps called his church the Mercy Street Baptist. In 1907, its congregation was large enough to occupy a building of its own on One Hundred Thirty-fourth Street in Harlem. By 1914, the church of about 300 members had acquired its new name and a new pastor, William W. Brown. Brown understood what kind of church would appeal to the great majority of newcomers flocking to Harlem. By 1920, Metropolitan claimed 3,500 members and annual receipts of $35,000, and owned a good deal of Harlem real estate including the former edifice of the Harlem Presbyterian Church on One Hundred Twenty-eighth Street.[31]

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[31] *Ibid.*, August 1, 1907, January 10, 1920; Greater New York Federation of Churches, 11.

William W. Brown was perhaps the personification of the Southern Baptist preacher migrated North. In the pulpit, his sermons were generally other-worldly in nature, and the services at Metropolitan were marked by a spirit of informality between preacher and audience that did not discourage audience participation. Out of the pulpit, Brown was a keen businessman and a remarkable church administrator who paid constant attention to opportunities to improve the economic well-being of both his congregation and himself. He was already an experienced preacher when he came to Metropolitan from Pittsburgh in 1914 at the age of 55. He was born in Virginia in 1858 and boasted that the total amount of his formal schooling amounted to 15 days. He preached in country churches in his early years until he was called to a Baptist church in Roanoke, Virginia, in 1888. He stayed there until 1902 when he went to Pittsburgh. Brown served Metropolitan from 1914 until his death in 1930, when he was succeeded by one of his 13 children, W. Abner Brown.[32]

Brown tightly organized his church in order to preserve its unity, to keep it in contact with the mass and to insure that its great power acted for the benefit of the whole congregation. He followed the practice of organizing the church into a great number of clubs each with a special function but often competing with each other. Most impressive was Metropolitan's fund-raising system which rivalled Abyssinian's for efficiency and results. Every member of the church was expected to give "dues" of 25 cents a week and no more was requested, emphasizing the idea of an equalitarian community. There were no special collections except that twice a year, one dollar was given. The pastor received the full collection every third Sunday as his pay and reported that in 1919 his salary amounted to $6,841.50. Reverend Brown tried to mold Metropolitan Baptist into a cooperative venture that touched all aspects of a member's life. By 1918, the church ran a grocery store, a butcher shop and a hardware store for the benefit of the congregation, and had begun to purchase houses in Harlem in order to rent to members. In 1920, Brown announced the formation of a real estate company, the "50 Per Cent Profit-Sharing Company," open to members of the congregation who wished to purchase stock. The company purchased property and gave first preference to its stockholders as tenants at bargain rentals. Reverend Brown attempted to justify his real estate activity by repeatedly making "Buy Property" the text of his sermons. The company was ultimately bought by the Terry Holding Company in 1921. Brown continued to be interested in real estate investment and in the 1920's was noted as the "principle promoter of the Progressive Commercial Association of America which owns real estate in Harlem worth $600,000." According to the *Age*, Brown had "built up a personal fortune in real estate of more than $100,000.[33]

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[32] *Age*, September 27, 1930; *Amsterdam*, September 24, 1930; Boris, II, 56; Phillips, 25-26; Brown, "Negro Religious Worship in New York City from 1625 to 1947," 21-22.

Buying property and encouraging cooperative business enterprises were the distinctive features of Reverend Brown's social gospel. He was little concerned with politics or with the fight for equal rights nationally or locally. It was his feeling that political equality and an end to discrimination would come if the Negro could improve himself economically and spiritually. When asked to comment on the alleged killing by the police of three black men in a New York City police station in 1922, Brown raised no cry of protest, but rather suggested that the moral regeneration of the community would solve the problem. "Let us pray," he said, "that those in authority will see to it that such will not be repeated....There are thousands of people in Harlem who never attend church and if the pastors of well-established churches were given permits to go on the streets and preach to them it would help conditions here very much."

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[33] *Age*, November 29, 1917, January 26, 1918, January 10, 1920, June 25, 1921, November 28, 1925, September 27, 1930; James Weldon Johnson, "Harlem--Culture Capital," in Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York, 1925), 306; Phillips, 24; Brown, "Negro Religious Worship in New York City from 1625 to 1947," 21-22; clipping from unidentified New York City newspaper, Gumby Collection (Columbia University).

Brown also was never much interested in community-wide social welfare activities, and his conservative theology restricted the recreational activities of the church. Opposed to dancing and plays, Brown even closed the gymnasium of the new church feeling that the boys who came there "were too boisterous."[34]

A number of other smaller churches, founded during this period,developed more slowly into important institutions. William S. Holder, who resigned as assistant pastor of Abyssinian Baptist in the turmoil of 1908, founded in 1911 the Harlem Congregational Church, the first black Congregational church in Manhattan. Charles Douglass Martin founded the first branch of the Moravian Church in Harlem in 1908, the Fourth Moravian Church. As late as 1915,he was the only black Moravian minister in the world. Martin was also one of the first black New York ministers to come from the West Indies. Though the church never grew very large, Martin often spoke out strongly on racial issues and took positions of leadership on protests. He was, for instance, a member of the original committee that organized the Silent Protest Parade in 1917. James K. Humphrey, the first black Seventh Day Adventist preacher and also a West Indian by birth, organized the Harlem Seventh Day Adventist Church in 1912. Humphrey resigned from the denomination in 1930, charging racial discrimination, and formed the United Sabbath Day Adventist Church. In 1916, the Protestant Episcopal Church established the Church of the Crucifixion in Harlem under the direction of Reverend Jedediah Edmead specifically to fulfill the needs of the West Indian migrants settling in Harlem.[35]

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[34] Age, July 22, 1922; Phillips, 24.

There were, of course, a large number of Baptist churches founded, a few of which grew rapidly enough to afford the luxury of an edifice--Baptist Tabernacle, Baptist Temple and St. Paul all could claim this distinction by the 1920's. For a Baptist Church to build or buy an edifice meant that the congregation would have to assume a heavy debt since the amount of denominational help was minimal. But, without a church structure, a congregation was competitively at a disadvantage and stood to lose members to the more well-equipped groups. Heavy debts were often contracted by overambitious ministers who gambled on continuously expanding real estate values and congregations. None had the ability of men like Powell or William Brown and their efforts were often marred by failure or very limited success. Reverend Daniel W. Wisher left Baptist Temple under pressure after announcing a plan to buy property worth $30,000 in Harlem. Reverend J. Twisby left Baptist Tabernacle Church in 1922 despairing of ever getting the church out of debt after committing it to a $40,000 building program a year earlier. The Age noted the case of a Harlem church that bought three gutted buildings and then lacked the money to rebuild them, and another of "a congregation of about two hundred [that] was beguiled into purchase of a church building valued at $150,000." The Age was often editorially critical of risky church building, excessive competition among the churches and pastors "responsible for the waste of the funds of their flocks [because they] were ambitious to preach in big churches."[36]

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[35] Age, May 7, 1908, August 2, 1917; Lassalle Best, "Brief History of the Seventh Day Adventist Church among Negroes in New York," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--The Church in New York" (Schomburg Collection); Mather, 184-185; Boris, II, 121; United States Works Progress Administration, The Historical Records Survey, Inventory of the Church Archives in New York City: The Protestant Episcopal Church, I, 127.

Increasingly after 1910, the time, energy and money of Manhattan's black churches and black ministers were spent in establishing locations in Harlem. The growth of the more successful of these churches was phenomenal as the number of black New Yorkers rapidly increased. But, as time spent on matters of moving, buying property, erecting new buildings and refurbishing old ones increased, the time spent on other social concerns declined. Most noticeably lacking were projects designed to help newcomers adjust to the city. The prevailing spirit seemed to be that of hoping to make the churches attractive enough so that all newcomers would be drawn to membership. The mood of this period was optimistic; the black man was wanted in the North; there were jobs for him; and, after some pressure, there was housing. Thus, the attention was drawn away from improving the conditions of the black community, for it was thought that these conditions would improve naturally once the rapid increase in population came to an end. The fact that blacks were now moving to one of the more attractive neighborhoods in the city, no longer sentenced for life to the Tenderloin or San Juan Hill, was an additional factor in this optimism.

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[36] Age, May 26, 1910, December 8, 1910, April 30, 1914, July 1, 1921, December 10, 1921, March 25, 1922.

This is not to say that the churches abandoned their social welfare and recreational projects, only that these were a less important part of their total social activity. St. Philip's, for instance, with its new building in Harlem, which included a fully equipped gymnasium, and its greater income from real estate investments, increased its recreational activities, its welfare services and its vocational training work. The work of Salem, which included a large number of activities for young people, was noted enthusiastically by social worker, Frances Blascoer. Abyssinian was filling the role of an employment agency for the newcomers from the South, and much of the large cost of the new church resulted from the provisions for recreational features such as a well-equipped gymnasium, meeting hall and lecture rooms. The churches continued their lyceums, social clubs and welfare groups. They vigorously supported the branch of the Y.W.C.A. which opened in Harlem in 1913 and were instrumental in the opening of a Y.M.C.A. in Harlem in 1919. The one significant element missing from this activity when compared to the first decade was any very strong attempt to cleanse the community of its apparent ills. There were no crusades against prostitution, gambling, drinking and night life that had so often occupied the ministers in the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill.[37]

In turn, much more attention was paid by the churches and their ministers to two significant areas--housing and black-owned businesses. Housing, in fact, seemed the key social welfare issue and black-owned businesses were seen as the long range solution to the "Negro problem." Early in the decade the housing problem was essentially the inability to rent apartments or buy property in Harlem because of racial discrimination. White property owners and real estate men tried desperately to restrict the size of the black population in Harlem. This attempt was broken largely due to the work of black businessmen and ministers. St. Philip's, Abyssinian, St. Mark's, Metropolitan and Mother Zion all bought apartment houses in Harlem, many of them on restricted blocks, and began renting to Negroes. Most of the leading pastors were active backers of Negro-owned real estate companies investing in Harlem property. Powell and Bishop were among the first blacks to move to some of the "showpiece" homes in Harlem. And, of course, once black churches were actually established in Harlem, mass pressure was brought to bear upon white discrimination.[38]

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[37] *Ibid.*, March 28, 1912, January 16, 1913, July 17, 1913, February 10, 1916, January 11, 1917, April 5, 1917, September 27, 1919; *The New York World*, November 14, 1920; Blascoer, 54, 58; Clyde Vernon Kiser, *Sea Island to City: A Study of St. Helena Islanders in Harlem and Other Urban Centers* (New York, 1932), 53.

Once blacks were allowed access to Harlem housing, attention turned to the exorbitant rents being charged. Ministers led mass protest meetings against high rents and spoke of the "immoral tendencies," such as taking in boarders or staging "rent parties," arising from the "vicious rent system." St. Philip's and Abyssinian tried to make their apartments models not only of cleanliness but of reasonable rents. A dilemma soon arose, however, when it became obvious that some of the most vicious rent gougers were black real estate agents who had purchased property or were managing buildings for whites. The opposition to high rents, therefore, often came into conflict with the active support for black businessmen. Partly because of this, the protest against high rents was never pushed to the point of an effective and continuing organization that could have had a chance of permanently affecting the situation. Ministers again turned to secular organizations, especially the Urban League, for leadership in housing problems and reserved their role to fund-raising and publicity for the Urban League and an occasional sermon against high rents and grafting landlords.[39]

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[38] Age, November 29, 1917, January 10, 1920, June 25, 1921; Osofsky, 92-123.

Ministers actively preached the gospel that the future salvation of the race lay in business enterprise. This was a familiar theme for black ministers, but one that took on increasing meaning during this period. One could point to the spectacular success some black businessmen had already made and to the great opportunity for many more now that the black population was concentrated geographically into an all-black community. If blacks composed the great majority of the population of Harlem, should they not also own and operate the great majority of businesses there, and, if so, would this not give them a firm claim on full equality? Ministers recognized the major problems hindering black business enterprise--how to amass the necessary capital and how to convince consumers to patronize the businesses. In sermon after sermon ministers flailed away at congregations, urging them to invest their savings in a business rather than depositing it in a white-controlled bank and appealing to race pride to buy from black businessmen whenever possible.

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[39] Age, January 2, 1913, August 10, 1916, September 28, 1916, October 5, 1916, November 9, 1916, December 28, 1916, February 22, 1919; New York Urban League, Annual Report, 1919.

Watt Terry's real estate holding company, which was formed in 1918 and listed among its principal organizers Powell, Hayes, Brooks, J. W. Brown, W. W. Brown and Sims, used its support among the clergy to confront these problems. The company originally planned to raise capital by selling stock widely to Negroes, pricing a share at $10. The ministers were seen to be promising salesmen for such a project which aimed to develop the combined saving power of the black masses as a source of capital. If the masses could be convinced of the importance of saving and of investing their savings in a company designed to improve their own community by making better housing available to Negroes, the resultant gain for all would be great. The role of the ministers was to convince their congregations of the importance and long-term benefit of the project and to dispel their traditional distrust of Negro-owned businesses. Reverend Brown at Metropolitan Baptist attempted to stimulate both mass investment and consumption through the device of the church cooperative. As had earlier been exhibited in sickness and death benefit societies, the church had been used in the past to experiment in cooperative economics and these experiments continued in the twentieth century. However, such experiments were never looked on with much favor. Ministers and their congregations held to an overriding faith in capitalism and free enterprise.[40]

Just as the gathering of the black population into one geographical area in Harlem stimulated the development of black-owned businesses, so it also stimulated the idea that blacks should represent the area in state and city government and control the local political organizations at the district level. The second decade of the twentieth century witnessed an increased amount of political activity pointed toward the achievement of black self-representation in New York City, and the leading ministers took an active part in this movement. The political action was not in the least characterized by militant protests and radical alternatives. Rather, inherent in it was a faith in the system as it existed and a confidence that working in a practical way within the system would afford real gains for the blacks in a short period of time. As early as 1913, Negroes in Manhattan were pressuring the Republican Party to nominate a Negro to run for alderman from the Twenty-first District which included much of black Harlem. Under the leadership of Fred Moore, editor of the Age, the United Civic League was formed for this purpose. Powell, Cullen and Bishop were members of the Executive Committee. When the Republicans passed over John M. Royall, the candidate of the Civic League, the group decided to run Royall as an independent. This move led some ministers, who had refused to back the movement in the beginning because they felt ministers should not work in partisan politics, to support Royall because they looked on his candidacy as a moral rather than a political cause. Every one of the leading ministers active in New York in 1913 supported the Royall candidacy, all by public endorsement, some by Sunday sermons before their congregations and a few by district-wide campaigning. Royall was defeated, but the United Civic League continued and in 1915 backed Reverend Bolden, the Progressive Party nominee, in the contest for State Assembly from the Twenty-first Assembly District. Bolden did not receive the vigorous backing from his fellow ministers that Royall had elicited in 1913, although none opposed him. His candidacy was also unsuccessful.[41]

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[40] Age, October 3, 1912, July 2, 1914, November 30, 1916, January 11, 1917, November 29, 1917, December 13, 1919, January 10, 1920, June 25, 1921; Colored American Review, I (October 1, 1915), 4.

The continued increase of black voters in the Harlem districts, however, made the work of the United Civic

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[41] Age, September 18, 1913, September 25, 1913, October 2, 1913, October 23, 1913; Bolden, "An Open Letter to the American People," 3; Morsell, 32.

League easier, and, in 1917, it succeeded in securing the Republican nomination for State Assembly from the Nineteenth Assembly District for Edward A. Johnson. Johnson became the first Negro to sit in the State Assembly. The first black New York City alderman, Charles Roberts, was nominated by the Republicans and elected in 1919. This support from the Republicans helped cement the loyalty of the Negro to the Grand Old Party, especially since the Democrats continued to hold back from nominating a Negro. Neither Tammany Hall nor the Wilson Administration, the two most easily recognizable symbols of the Democratic Party, had caught the imagination of the black voter. As Reverend Powell said, in opposing the Democratic candidate, during the mayoralty campaign of 1917: "The church cannot consistently pray 'Thy Kingdom Come' and then vote on November 6 to turn the city government over to a political party which has the reputation of commercializing gambling, prostitution and every form of vice." Even the Age, customarily critical of Negro ministers who used their positions to engage in politics, advised the ministers in 1917 to urge their congregations to vote Republican. The editor wrote:

> Every colored minister of the gospel ought to find time next Sunday to advise the voters of his congregation to support Hughes and Fairbanks. In making such a plea from the pulpit they could not

> be charged with playing politics. Woodrow Wilson as President has broken the Golden Rule.[42]

Reverdy Ranson interjected himself back into the New York scene in 1918 when he declared his intention to run for the Republican nomination for Congress from the Twenty-first Congressional District in Harlem. Ransom failed in his effort to get the regular Republican nomination and submitted a petition to run in the primary, but a court declared some of the signatures to be invalid and ordered his name removed from the ballot only a few days before the election. Ransom tried to organize a write-in campaign but got only 465 votes out of 26,240 cast. He received little active support from his fellow ministers, although he claimed the backing of the United Civic League. Ransom campaigned on a platform that demanded political recognition for the Negro who had remained loyal during the war. "If the Negroes are good enough to suffer and die in defense of the flag of their country on a foreign shore," Ransom said in the campaign, "they are good enough to receive a vote at the polls." Looking back on the campaign in his autobiography, he commented:

> I persisted in my candidacy after many rebuffs in the hope of breaking the strangle hold of the

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[42] Age, June 22, 1916, November 2, 1916, November 1, 1917, August 23, 1919, September 20, 1919; Osofsky, 170-171; Morsell, 32.

> Republican organization upon its black constituency and to serve an emphatic notice that the day of the civic and political exploitation of the black people of Harlem is ended.[43]

The First World War--to which Ransom alluded--raised the most important and emotional national issue blacks faced in this decade. Most in the Negro community supported the war effort but called on the government to make the promises to Europe good at home for black people. When the United States first entered the war, black ministers pointed out that now was an opportune time for Negroes to press for a fulfillment of their rights. Speaking before his congregation in 1917, A. Clayton Powell raised this issue in an uncompromising way:

> This is the proper time for us to make a special request for our constitutional rights as American citizens. The ten million colored people of this country were never so badly needed as now....
>
> Give us the same rights which you enjoy and then we will fight by your side....
>
> If this kind of talk is not loyalty, then I am disloyal; if this is not patriotism, then I am unpatriotic; if this is treason, then I am a traitor....It is infinitely more disgraceful and outrageous to hang and burn colored men, boys, and women without a trial in the days of peace than it is for Germans in time of war to blow up ships loaded with mules and molasses.

A similar idea was expressed by W. Spencer Carpenter, pastor of the Bridge Street A.M.E. Church in Brooklyn:

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[43] *Age*, March 2, 1918, March 9, 1918; Reverdy Ransom, "Seeking a Seat in Congress and a Voice in Government," *A.M.E. Church Review*, XXXIV (April, 1918), 228-231; Ransom, *Pilgrimage*, 55-57, 234, 244-245, 248-252.

> Our country aims to make Democracy safe in this world. Then let us first make Democracy a fact and not a farce at home....The coming of Universal Democracy will be delayed until under our flag which we love and for which we would die, the iron heel of oppression is taken from the necks of my race in America and the black man be given a square chance without facing mob-rule, burnings-alive, and "Jim-Crowism" to sing his song as a citizen--as a man.[44]

Blacks increased their protests in the summer of 1917 after a wave of race riots seemed to demonstrate the white opposition to any display of Negro equality. The usually moderate Reverend William H. Brooks of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church expressed the exasperation of the black community when he said: "America is hardly yet prepared to go on a world-cleansing expedition with so much filth in her own back-yard." New York blacks staged a silent parade down Fifth Avenue, on July 28, 1917, to protest lynching, mob violence and Jim Crowism. New York's black clergy participated in the organization of this local protest. Reverends Bishop, Cullen, Martin, Powell, J. W. Brown, Hayes and George Frazier Miller of St. Augustine's Protestant Episcopal Church in Brooklyn joined W. E. B. DuBois, James Weldon Johnson and John Nail in the parade organization committee. The committee presented President Wilson and Congress a petition asking for Federal action to end lynching and mob violence. Reverend Miller was even more outspoken against the war. A Socialist and an editor of The Messenger, Miller argued that the working class and the Negro were being duped into fighting to preserve a system that oppressed them. He refused to fly the American flag outside St. Augustine's during the war.[45]

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[44] *Age*, March 29, 1917, January 5, 1918.

Aside from engaging in this protest, black ministers generally worked to support the struggle for victory, hoping that if the Negro proved himself loyal he would be in a better position come the end of the war. Powell, J. W. Brown, Hyder, W. W. Brown, Brooks, Bolden, Sims, Bishop and Hayes were active in the effort to recruit the all-black Fifteenth Regiment as a showpiece of black fighting ability and patriotism. W. H. Brooks was chosen as chaplain. In one message he asked white people "to speak respectfully of the enlisted men and not to refer to them or call them 'niggers.'" Ministers backed war bond and war stamp drives, aided programs for war relief and conducted patriotic services in their churches. "Our boys in France will fight shoulder to shoulder with our American brothers and in cooperation with the splendid French in helping to bring about a real democracy for all mankind," predicted William W. Brown to his congregation. "We wish it to be fully and widely known," wrote George Sims to President Wilson, "that as a race we can be relied upon in the requirements of the future, as much as we have proven ourselves in the past." Toward the end of the war, even A. Clayton Powell could tell his congregation: "The twelve million hearts of my people throb with a pardonable pride because of the splendid part they are taking in this benevolent overseas mission."[46]

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[45] Ibid., September 24, 1908, July 12, 1917, July 19, 1917, August 2, 1917, March 15, 1919, December 6, 1919, December 13, 1919; Mather, 192; Odette Harper, "Account of Silent Protest Parade in New York," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--History of Negroes in New York" (Schomburg Collection); St. Augustine's Protestant Episcopal Church, Joint Celebration: Fiftieth Anniversary of St. Augustine's P.E. Church and Thirty Year Service of the Rector, The Rev. George Frazier Miller, M.A., D.D. (New York, 1926).

By the end of the war, Negro leaders expected that real progress would be made toward racial equality as repayment for the Negro's loyalty and heroism during the war. Most appeared to agree with Powell's hope that the war would result in greater respect for Negro rights. As he said in 1918:

> Every war in which the American colored man has engaged, brought him a little nearer fair treatment, a little nearer his inherent and constitutional rights.
>
> This war is being fought to break down caste distinctions and racial barriers erected by prejudice founded upon the foolish, false and poisonous notion that one race is naturally superior to the other.[47]

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[46] Age, March 29, 1917, April 5, 1917, April 26, 1917, May 24, 1917, January 19, 1918, September 7, 1918, September 14, 1918; A. Clayton Powell, Patriotism and the Negro (New York, 1918), unpaged.

[47] Powell, Patriotism and the Negro, unpaged.

Such a point of view was probably part rationalization, part a result of the euphoria created by the government's propaganda campaign, but mostly based on the optimism that seemed so pervasive in post World War Harlem. Having experienced a decade of progress in which most of the leading churches had established themselves and were growing rapidly in the Harlem "Mecca" and in which blacks in larger numbers than ever before had found good paying jobs, adequate housing, speculative gains, political offices, equal treatment and national honor, New York's leading black pastors looked forward to the next decade with real confidence that the progress would continue. Their hope was that the promise of a better life which had been extended to Harlem's elite would also be made a reality for the mass of black people which made up the bulk of Harlem's population. It was to minister to these masses that had prompted most of the leading pastors to press their congregations to move to Harlem. The ministers wanted to establish a firm basis for a healthy and viable community; a community based on Christian values and black unity. The hope and the optimism had a significant influence in the 1920's on the attitudes and activities of the leading clergy and the churches they served.

CHAPTER IV

AN ERA OF OPTIMISM:
THE NEW LEADING CLERGYMEN AND THE NEW CHURCHES, 1920-1930

Throughout the 1920's, Manhattan's black population continued to grow rapidly, fed by the increased migration from the South and the West Indies. By the end of the decade, Harlem had become virtually all black. The Negro population in Manhattan increased from 109,133 in 1920 to 224,670 in 1930, an increase of 115,537 or 106 per cent. In 1920, there were 73,953 Negroes living in Harlem, about a fourth of the total population of the district. In 1933, there were 233,998 Negroes in Harlem, 84 per cent of the total. In these 13 years, Harlem had lost 137,000 whites and gained 160,000 blacks.[1] The older churches established downtown continued to move to Harlem so that after 1926, of the important black churches in Manhattan, only St. Cyprian's was located outside of Harlem. And a large number of the new churches in a wide variety of denominations were established. For churches in Harlem, the 1920's, when expressed in quantitative terms--membership figures, annual receipts and expansion of facilities--was a boom period. In qualitative terms--progress toward establishment of a viable and healthy community--the success of the churches was less outstanding. Indeed, in the 1920's, the physical growth virtually precluded attention to improving the overall quality of life lived in America's leading black community.

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[1] United States Census Office, Fourteenth Census, 1920: Population, III, 682; United States Census Office, Fifteenth Census, 1930: Population (Washington, 1933), II, 70; Age, June 2, 1934.

The religious boom was best illustrated by a survey made by the Greater New York Federation of Churches in 1929 which found 160 Protestant churches in Harlem with a combined membership of over 60,000, with annual budgets totalling more that $600,000 and with property worth almost $7,000,000. Of these churches, only 33 met in their own edifices, the remainder holding services in residences, storefronts, halls or borrowed premises. Despite this fact, those churches with edifices had a combined membership of about 40,000 or nearly two-thirds of the total church population. Virtually every known Protestant denomination as well as a large number of individual sects belonging to no national denomination were represented. Many of these churches were founded in the 1920's, but only a few of the newer ones became at all powerful or attracted important ministers.[2]

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[2] Listed below are the total churches and membership figures for Harlem in 1929 grouped by denomination.

Denomination	Number of Churches	Membership
Baptist	46	27,948
Protestant Episcopal	7	7,151
Methodist Episcopal	3	4,375
A.M.E.Z.	2	4,200
A.M.E.	7	3,855
Presbyterian	2	1,805
Congregational	2	950
Sabbath Day Adventist	1	700
Colored Methodist Episcopal	2	550

In 1919, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (C.M.E.) founded its first branch in New York City, the Williams Institutional C.M.E. Church. Throughout the United States the C.M.E. denomination claimed the fifth highest membership among blacks, outnumbered by only the Baptist, the A.M.E., the A.M.E.Z. and the Methodist Episcopal. But the C.M.E. Church, which had begun in 1870 in a friendly split from the Southern Methodist Church, had never made a determined effort to establish congregations in urban centers of the North. To head the New York church, the C.M.E. bishops chose William Yancey Bell. Reverend Bell was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1887, the son of a self-educated and highly respected C.M.E. minister. He graduated from Lane College in 1907 and left the South determined to dedicate his life to Christian service and to "do something about

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Moravian	1	500
Wesleyan Methodist	1	400
Lutheran	2	400
American Methodist Episcopal	1	360
Seventh Day Adventist	1	300
Christian Science	1	?
Other	81	9,139
	160	62,633

These figures must be treated carefully, however, and it is very possible that the survey underestimated both the number and size of the storefronts. Since many of the storefronts did not keep records, those who made the survey computed an average size for storefronts from those storefronts that kept accurate records and applied this average for all churches that kept no records. Thus, the membership figures for 25 of the Baptist churches and 77 of the "Other" churches were determined artificially. Greater New York Federation of Churches, 11-20.

the racial situation." He attended Northwestern University and recieved the M.A. and S.T.B. degrees and entered Yale University Graduate School from which he received a Ph.D in Semitic languages in 1923. Before coming to New York, he had taught classical languages at Lane and had been a chaplain in the U.S. Army. He stayed in New York only 10 years, but long enough to give a firm, if not spectacular foundation to Williams Institutional Church.[3]

As the name of the church indicated, Reverend Bell felt that Williams should be a center for the social and recreational needs of the people of the community in order to fulfill its religious purpose. The new church building, which was begun in 1922, included a good deal of space designed for recreational activities. Bell planned to keep it open seven days a week. He also organized a real estate company within the church whose purpose was to find suitable apartments for church members. He was a member of the N.A.A.C.P. and worked for the Republican Party on local elections, but, in general, on community-wide issues, he kept in the background. He left Williams in 1928 to teach at Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta. At that point the church had about 500 members. In the 1930's, he was elected a bishop of the C.M.E. Church.[4]

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[3] Johnson, Johnson and Palmer, 269; Woodson, 193-196; Bardolph, 151-152; Boris, I, 12.

[4] Bardolph, 151-152; Horace C. Savage, Life and Times of Bishop Isaac Lane (Nashville, 1958), 212; Age, January 12, 1924,

Reverend R. C. Lawson also arrived in New York in 1919 and began holding street meetings on West One Hundred Thirty-third Street in the midst of what he considered the worst block of Harlem. Lawson, who came from a family of revivalist preachers in Louisiana, had prior to 1919 preached in the Middle West. He found the Harlem environment right for his brand of revivalism and began to establish his church on a more permanent basis. The street meetings took a more regular form and he was soon calling himself the founder and bishop of a new denomination, The Refuge Church of Christ of the Apostolic Faith. By 1927, the church claimed 600 members in New York, owned and occupied property worth $45,000 and had established congregations in other parts of the United States.[5]

Reverend Lawson's work emphasized two things--the immediate material improvement of the lives of his flock and a fierce opposition to the sins abounding in the weakened social structure of the Harlem ghetto. Lawson preached over and over again against the evils of drink, prostitution, gambling, cabarets and homosexuality which he felt were eroding the character of the people in Harlem. These sins he felt could be avoided and a beginning made

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October 4, 1924, April 3, 1927; Amsterdam, October 17, 1928.

[5] Age, January 15, 1927, July 26, 1930; Greater New York Federation of Churches, 17.

toward a healthy community by improvement in the material aspects of life. But for this improvement to come by mere handouts, whether from the government or from private sources, was, he believed, as destructive to moral character and thus to any chance of an improved society, as was the original material poverty. "Feeding people free," said Lawson, "stimulates the idea of getting something for nothing, which is always morally dishonest...as it breeds parasites, and makes pawns and puppets of men and women, who otherwise, by their own initiative, would remain self-reliant."

Lawson favored self-help programs organized on a cooperative basis and used the Refuge Church as the basis. Even before the congregation had a church building, it had begun a cooperative grocery store and restaurant which afforded its members low prices as well as paying jobs. By the 1930's, Refuge Church was operating a religious bookstore and printing house which supplied all types of religious literature to other churches in Harlem, an undertaking establishment, a beauty parlor, an apartment house, an insurance organization and an industrial training school, all of which were staffed by members of the church. Other than within the congregation of the Refuge Church, however, Lawson was not well known. He rarely joined with his fellow ministers in community projects and kept the activities of his church on a membership-only basis. Lawson was content that his church had transformed one of the worst blocks in Harlem to an environment dominated by the Refuge Church.[6]

In 1921, the New York Congregational Conference of New York City found a need for a church in Harlem and brought Alexander C. Garner from Plymouth Congregational Church in Washington to establish the Grace Congregational Church. The new church merged with the Harlem Congregational Church and, using a loan from the Congregational Church Building Society, acquired a permanent edifice on One Hundred Thirty-ninth Street in 1923. Reverend Garner, who came to New York after serving Plymouth for 24 years, was born in Tennessee in about 1870. He graduated from the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1891 and studied at both Howard and Catholic Universities while in Washington. In New York, Garner proved popular with his fellow ministers and was several times elected president of the Interdenominational Preachers Association, the only city-wide organization that united ministers across denominational lines. He also served in a number of state and district offices of the Congregational Church including assistant moderator of the National Council of Congregational Churches. In 1924, he was made chaplain of the black branch of the New York National Guard, the Three Hundred Sixty-ninth Infantry, and, in 1935, he was chosen as the first Negro chaplain of Harlem Hospital. He remained at Grace until his retirement in 1939.[7]

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[6] John Hoshor, God in a Rolls Royce: The Rise of Father Divine: Madman, Menace or Messiah (New York, 1936), 184; Age, March 15, 1924, January 15, 1927, February 9, 1929, March 1, 1930, January 30, 1932, May 22, 1937, July 31, 1937.

Garner espoused a moderate social gospel approach, stating at the beginning of his New York ministry: "It is the aim of Grace Congregational to conduct such a program as to attract, as well as demonstrate that it is truly interested in community life and welfare....If the church can teach us to live in peace on earth, then heaven is assured." Although his church was limited by its size (about 750 in 1929) in being particularly effective in Harlem, Garner himself was constantly active in projects designed to improve the life of black Harlem. In the early 1920's, he was a leader of the moral crusade that focused on the ease in which alcoholic beverages could be obtained in Harlem, but which included campaigns against tenement house congestion, high rents, inadequate health conditions, Sabbath desecration, white exploitation and disrespect for law and order. Garner felt strongest about and feared most for the youth of the community and publicly pressed for more funds for recreational activities for Harlem youngsters. He was also one of the earliest of Harlem ministers to actively back the Sleeping Car Porters Union in their attempt in the late 1920's to gain recognition from the Pullman Company.[8]

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[7] Age, March 10, 1923, August 11, 1923, January 26, 1924, October 13, 1924, June 24, 1939; Amsterdam, October 7, 1925, May 26, 1926, October 6, 1926, October 5, 1927, April 30, 1930, July 27, 1935, February 19, 1938.

The most successful of the new churches founded in the 1920's was Emmanuel A.M.E. Church established in 1926 as a mission in a storefront on One Hundred Nineteenth Street. Emmanuel soon purchased a permanent edifice and grew to a membership of over 1,000 by 1929. An important reason for the success of Emmanuel was the ability of its pastor, Decatur Ward Nichols. Just out of divinity school in 1926 and only 26 years old, Nichols, contrary to the usual practice of the A.M.E. Church, remained at Emmanuel for 14 years until he was elected bishop in 1940. During these years he marshalled the growth of the church and became a respected community leader in Harlem, two factors which probably influenced the decision to keep him in New York. Born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1900, the son of an A.M.E. minister, Nichols attended Howard University where he received his B.A. in 1923 and Drew University where he received his M.A. in 1924 and his B.D. in 1926. Nichols was an example of what would emerge as a new pattern for

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[8] Age, October 27, 1923, January 12, 1924, March 15, 1924, November 1, 1924, November 6, 1926, March 10, 1928, April 7, 1928, May 4, 1929; Amsterdam, February 17, 1926, June 11, 1930, October 26, 1932, February 19, 1938.

Harlem ministers in the 1920's and 1930's--born in the twentieth century, raised in an urban and middle-class environment and well educated in Northern schools. One important detail of the older pattern in Nichols' background was that he spent the first 20 years of his life in the deep South. This tie was important in the rapid growth of his church. At least in the early years, Emmanuel's membership was made up largely of migrants from South Carolina, some of whom had known Nichols' father.[9]

Emmanuel Church and the A.M.E. denomination took most of Reverend Nichols' time as he dedicated himself to building the church to a respectable position both within New York and the A.M.E. denomination. His success was amazing. Getting a late start and competing with the long-established and well-known Bethel Church, Emmanuel was rivalling Bethel in size by the 1930's. As early as 1936, Nichols was being mentioned as a likely prospect for bishop and Emmanuel was chosen as the host church for the Quadrennial General Conference in that year. His thinking conformed well to the temper of the times in the 1920's, for he voiced a moderate social gospel point of view combined with a traditional theology. Emmanuel supplied services to the community other than spiritual but not to any great extent nor did Nichols emphasize this role. His sermons often spoke of the need for faith in Christ so as to endure the trials of the present world. He voiced an interest in black-owned business and was a member and served on the Executive Board of the New York Urban League.[10]

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[9] *Age*, June 30, 1928, June 22, 1929; *Amsterdam*, December 20, 1926, May 18, 1940; J. G. Robinson, "Spurious Evangelists," *A.M.E. Church Review*, XLIII (January, 1927), 166-167; R. R. Wright, Jr., compiler, *The Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (2nd edition, Philadelphia, 1947), 212.

Reverend Nichols, however, did take an active interest in politics. As early as 1927, he was active in the movement to back Fred Moore for alderman, and, in 1928, he made his position on the church's role in politics clear when he said:

> I am one of those who believe that the church should play its part in helping men and women to better their conditions here in this life, as well as prepare for the life to come, and it is my purpose to enter actively in this righteous fight to place Negro leaders in control of the 19th A.D. and to secure race representation in the State Legislature, of which we are now deprived.

To Nichols the battle for more black representation was a battle "waged between the forces of righteousness and certain unscrupulous politicians."[11]

Although it never grew to any appreciable size or purchased an edifice of its own, the Harlem Community

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[10] Age, June 22, 1929, January 3, 1931, December 16, 1933, March 28, 1936; Amsterdam, October 5, 1927, March 19, 1930; New York Urban League, Annual Report, 1940 (New York, 1940); Wright, The Encyclopedia of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 212.

[11] Age, September 3, 1927, July 14, 1928, August 4, 1928, August 31, 1929.

Church took on some importance because of the stature of its minister, Ethelred Brown. Brown, a native of the West Indies and the only black ordained Unitarian minister in the United States in 1920, established the church on One Hundred Thirty-sixth Street in 1920. His theological message was by far the most liberal of any of the Harlem ministers. He hoped that his church services would provoke discussion and serious thought rather than emotionalism, and he was a constant critic of the more traditional religion practiced by his fellow pastors. In a letter to the Amsterdam in 1926, he wrote:

> The Negro has too much of the wrong kind of religion, that is, the kind which encourages him to transfer his interest from the here and now to some future existence in some other world--the kind which provokes a servile contentment instead of provoking a rebellious discontentment--which (worst of all) destroys his personal responsibility by leading him to believe in the possibility of escaping punishment for his wrong doing. In a word, the popular religion of the Negro is wrong in that, if it were consistently lived, which, thank God, it is not, would prevent the building up of a strong, clean, manly, independent life, here and now.[12]

Brown's position on other matters was also considerably to the left of most other ministers. He was a member of the Socialist Party and ran for Congress in 1928, for

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[12] The Voice of the Negro, I (February, 1927), 4; Ottley and Weatherby, 210, 223; Age, November 26, 1927; Amsterdam, February 21, 1923, January 6, 1926, December 27, 1933.

City Council in 1929 and for the State Assembly in 1930 and 1932 on the Socialist ticket. In 1928,he renamed his church the Hubert Harrison Memorial Church after the black labor leader and Socialist who had helped organize Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. Brown considered Harrison, who died in 1927, "the first great atheist of our race." Not surprisingly, Ethelred Brown was in the forefront of protest movements of the 1920's, most especially against high rents and for the rights of the workingman. He tried to make his church a center for protest movements, but he could never attract the mass base necessary to provide him with powerful support. Although Brown's liberal theology and radical politics were against the grain in the 1920's, he asked questions and provided answers that were widely accepted in the next decade.[13]

A large number of Baptist churches were established in the 1920's, but most of these were of the storefront variety and never grew to appreciable size. Three--Walker Memorial, Little Mt. Zion and Mt. Moriah--were successful enough to purchase permanent edifices and claim large memberships by 1929. However, their ministers have not been included in this study because they did not concern themselves with larger community issues or, at least, did not make any concern known in the available sources.[14]

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[13] Age, May 12, 1928, November 10, 1928, May 25, 1929, November 9, 1929; Amsterdam, June 10, 1928, July 17, 1929, November 5, 1930, November 16, 1932; Ottley and Weatherby, 210, 223.

For the older churches, the 1920's saw a remarkable stability in pastors. Powell remained at Abyssinian, Sims at Union, J. W. Brown at Mother Zion, Hayes at Mt. Olivet, W. W. Brown at Metropolitan, Cullen at Salem, J. W. Johnson at St. Cyprian's, Bolden at Emmanuel and Bishop at St. Philip's. Only three churches called new ministers--St. Mark's, which replaced the retiring William H. Brooks in 1923 with John W. Robinson; St. James, which called William Lloyd Imes in 1925 after Frank Hyder's departure; and Bethel, which continued the A.M.E. practice of a short pastoral tenure and had four different ministers during the decade.

John W. Robinson came to St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church from Chicago in 1923 to replace William H. Brooks who died just two months after his retirement. Robinson presided over the move, planned by Brooks, from the Fifty-third Street edifice to a new building in Harlem which was finally finished in 1926 at a cost of $500,000. For the younger and comparatively inexperienced Robinson to follow the venerable Brooks in what was perhaps black New York's most elite church was a difficult task. Robinson's difficulties were multiplied by the huge building expenses and by the necessity of relating an elite church to a black community composed of ever growing numbers of poor urban newcomers. Thus, not surprisingly, Robinson's time at St. Mark's was marked by a good deal of dissension. As early as 1927, there were stirrings of discontent within the congregation, and, in 1929, a petition signed by 250 members of St. Mark's called on the New York Conference of the Methodist Church to remove Reverend Robinson. The petition charged the pastor with autocratic behavior in expelling those who opposed him from the church and inefficiency in the management of the church's finances. In 1930, his opponents claimed that the church membership had fallen to one-fourth of what it had been under Reverend Brooks. Finally, in 1931, Robinson was removed from the pastorate by the Conference because of financial difficulties which had prompted the church's main creditors to threaten foreclosure of the mortgage. Robinson took his supporters with him and formed Christ Community Church, where he remained through the 1930's.[15]

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[14] Greater New York Federation of Churches, 11-12.

Robinson's difficulties at St. Mark's should not obscure the fact that he was a respected leader in the Harlem community. He was especially well regarded by his fellow pastors who several times elected him to positions in the

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[15] Age, March 3, 1923, April 9, 1927, October 5, 1929, September 6, 1930, April 4, 1931, April 11, 1931, April 25, 1931; Amsterdam, November 10, 1926, July 17, 1929; Greater New York Federation of Churches, 13. Robinson is one of the important Harlem ministers for which the available sources supply no biographical information.

Interdenominational Preachers Association and the Greater New York Federation of Churches. When he was threatened with dismissal in 1929, most of his fellow pastors signed a petition praising his "brilliant leadership and excellent services towards the advancement of the spiritual, moral, and civic betterment of the community," and asking that he be returned to St. Mark's. Robinson continually urged his congregation and his fellow ministers to pay attention to the social problems that surrounded them, arguing that a church with the stature of St. Mark's had to take an active role in questions of welfare, employment, housing, health and education. Direct action along these lines, however, was limited by his church's financial instability and his own lack of support. In politics he was nominally a Republican, occasionally supporting the party until the mid-1930's, but he was never very active in practical politics. In the 1930's, he was chosen as a member of Mayor LaGuardia's committee to study the causes of the Harlem riot of 1935. He also served as the chairman of the Permanent Committee for Better Schools in Harlem, a group he formed to pressure the city for better and more equal education for New York's black children. In 1940, he was appointed to the Manhattan Board of Education.[16]

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[16] Age, March 15, 1924, March 30, 1935, October 3, 1936; Amsterdam, July 8, 1925, October 7, 1925, January 13, 1926, April 10, 1929, January 1, 1930, February 26, 1930, April 18, 1936, January 20, 1940, September 27, 1941; New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Urban

The most important minister to enter the Harlem scene in the 1920's was William Lloyd Imes who became the pastor of St. James Presbyterian Church in 1925 and remained there through World War II. Reverend Imes, who was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1889, came from a family with a strong pride and a dedication to integration and racial justice. His grandfather had been a free farmer in Pennsylvania before the Civil War, and his father, Benjamin, had worked his way through Oberlin College and Divinity School in the 1870's. His mother also attended Oberlin where she earned a high school diploma. Upon graduation from Oberlin Divinity School, Benjamin Imes became a home missionary for the American Missionary Society and was sent to Memphis. There he built a self-supporting church and travelled throughout the South. The family was not rich, but there was a respect for knowledge and an encouragement that stimulated the bright and ambitious children to succeed.[17] "I am glad I had a home missionary bringing up," said William Imes, in an autobiographical sketch written later in his life. "There were always books, you see, and a high standard of life, and trained parents. My father coached me in preparation for college." There was also a strong

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Colored Population, Public Hearings, Manhattan, VI (December 13, 1937), 1053-1057.

[17] William Imes's two brothers were to become a physicist and a government worker. Bardolph, 302.

abolitionist spirit about the family, no doubt furthered by the time spent at Oberlin, and this spirit seemed to make a deep impression upon Imes throughout his life. He attended Fisk University in Nashville where he received his B.A. and M.A. From there he went on to Union Theological Seminary and Columbia Graduate School. He received the B.D. from Union and the M.A. in Sociology from Columbia, both in 1915. Imes preached for three years in Plainfield, New Jersey, and for seven at Lombard Central Church in Philadelphia before being called to assume the duties at St. James upon the forced resignation of Reverend Hyder in 1925.[18]

William Imes's M.A. thesis, which he wrote for the Columbia University Department of Sociology in 1915, gave some indication of his future interests as a Presbyterian minister in New York. The thesis, a well-written and well-researched sociological study of Negroes in Tennessee, pointed out that the basic problem of Negroes in Tennessee cities was the lack of employment opportunities. In addition, he made a case for increased recreational and educational facilities, emphasizing the importance of the youth of the race. The thesis demonstrated a strong hope for an integrated society in the future and a faith that opportunities would open for those who worked hard. He wrote:

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[18] *Age*, January 24, 1925; *Amsterdam*, January 21, 1925, October 14, 1925; William Lloyd Imes, "The Black Pietist," *The Black Pastures; An American Pilgrimage in Two Centuries; Essays and Sermons* (Nashville, 1957), 1-6; Bardolph, 302-303; Mary Jeness, *Twelve Negro Americans* (New York, 1936), 35-52; Boris, II, 201.

> To live together, forgetting as much as possible the dark chapters, and emphasizing the better and more hopeful conditions, will help tremendously. This does not mean that the black man is to show any servile spirit; he must fight against every wrong until his place as citizen is felt and thoroughly respected. But with his great need of thorough education and industrial basis, he should seize the present day with its unprecedented chances, otherwise it would seem inevitable that he should be eliminated entirely from the American nation and its remarkable civilization.

Imes applied these precepts at the St. James Church, and in doing so he became one of the leading advocates of the socially committed institutional church in Harlem.[19]

Three interests stand out in the early work of Reverend Imes at St. James--education, social work and young people. Conscious of the special problems of the young, both in his church and in the wider Harlem community, he attempted to make the church attractive to youth not only through the traditional recreational activities, but also by making the religion he preached and practiced relevant to them. In his regular young people's services he attempted to preach the message that religion was not only for the old or the quiet but could be the leading force in remolding the world. Imes considered the church an ideal educational institution for the community and organized vocational education courses and discussion groups in the church. Further, he often preached on educational themes, urging his congregation to continue their education and lecturing on Negro history. In the larger Harlem community, Imes and his wife worked for improvement of the public schools in Harlem. In 1926, Imes was elected president of the Parents Association of Junior High 139, and he and his wife were instrumental in beginning, in 1929, the Better School Club which brought to the public's attention the conditions and the treatment of children in Harlem schools.[20]

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[19] William Lloyd Imes, "The Negro Population of Tennessee" (M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1915), 21.

Reverend Imes also used his church, his sermons and his personal time for social work. It was one of his central theological messages that Christianity should "give the urge to do social work" or it "is useless." He staged an annual Social Workers Day at St. James at which all social service and welfare workers in the city were guests of honor, pushed the church into support of welfare work and was a leading member of the New York Urban League. A part of his message on welfare was not only that the contribution of money and energy was a Christian duty, but that those who received welfare should accept it with dignity and not "cringe and grovel." He was concerned with battling the traditional American attitude that to accept charity was demeaning and an indication of a basic inadequacy in the recipient. Such an attitude not only made the overall task of welfare more difficult since it contributed to the hopelessness on the part of the recipient, but, because a large number of recipients were black and the givers were white, it contributed to racial prejudice. He expressed these views in his sermon on Social Workers Day in 1931:

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[20] Age, June 6, 1926; Amsterdam, February 3, 1926, June 26, 1929, May 10, 1933, May 14, 1938.

> We should always be able to work with others, but we must never give them the idea that they can buy our self-respect. We must not be dazzled by whatever millions of dollars they may place at our disposal. The money for relief does not belong to those who distribute it. It is no more theirs than ours. It is God's money and humanity's. It was made by the sacrifice of us up here in Harlem as well as by others.

Under the leadership of Reverend Imes, St. James developed into a model institutional church with a growing membership. By 1927, the church had outgrown the old premises on One Hundred Twenty-seventh Street and moved to a larger edifice on One Hundred Forty-first Street that afforded it room to expand its recreational and educational as well as its religious activities. There were over 1,500 members in 1929.[21]

Though nominally a Republican through the 1920's, Imes refused to support any political candidate from the pulpit.

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[21] Age, December 8, 1928, April 27, 1929; Amsterdam, February 3, 1926, June 1, 1927, December 11, 1929, December 16, 1931; William Lloyd Imes, "The Truth about the Church in Harlem," The Black Pastures, 69-70; New York Urban League, Annual Report, 1934-1935 (New York, 1935); Greater New York Federation of Churches, 14.

He contended that it was his duty to inform his congregation of the strong and weak points of candidates but not to force his personal convictions on them. However, he urged active participation in political matters on the part of his congregation and supported movements for black representation of black districts. He applauded the move away from complete loyalty to the Republican Party discernible in the late 1920's, feeling that independent, thoughtful choice on election day would serve the Negro much better than blind loyalty. As early as 1928, Reverend Imes gave an indication of the more radical position he would take during the Depression. In a sermon delivered just before the Presidential election of 1928, he expressed a growing disillusionment with the Republican Party:

> The party of Lincoln was one thing; the party of Coolidge and Hoover is another. I am a Republican, but I am growing to be a very bad one. I'm becoming very restive and critical. The Republican Party has departed from its first love. Still I will remain inside the ranks.
>
> The Republican Party is giving too many privileges to the already privileged class. Prosperity--how much of it as a race have we gotten?...
>
> The time has come when we must unite in a common cause with all downtrodden people.

On the whole, his interest in politics remained secondary to the need for finding jobs, adequate housing, food and educational and recreational facilities for his people.[22]

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[22] Age, October 2, 1926, September 3, 1927, March 10, 1928, September 15, 1928, November 12, 1932, September 18, 1937; Amsterdam, July 25, 1928, September 19, 1928, July 31, 1929, October 19, 1932.

Reverend Imes was much more active on behalf of organized labor than were most of his contemporaries of the 1920's. This position became more common in the 1930's, but before the Depression Imes worked independently and through his church for workingmen's rights. He held an annual service at St. James on the theme "Labor" at which noted union leaders spoke and were honored. A. Philip Randolph spoke at St. James several times urging public support of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Imes worked to increase the number of Negroes in both the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and the American Federation of Labor, as well as to improve conditions of their work. And he was one of those who helped to support black striking miners in Pennsylvania in the winter of 1927-1928.[23]

At base, Imes believed in and worked for integration. His great vision of the world was one "in which both black and white will respect each other and dare to live as brothers." He devoted a good deal of time to the N.A.A.C.P. and to the Race Relations Department of the Federal Council of Churches. Essential to his dream of a truly integrated society was his conviction that the black man in America had much to contribute, that the integrated society would draw on the black heritage as well as the white. He condemned the "utterly mistaken and foolish policy" of "looking with condescension upon [Negroes], feeling that they are only children, and need the guidance and overlordship of others in every sphere." However, he reminded blacks that in continually protesting the obvious outrages against their race they should not lose sight of the necessity for "self-criticism and self-examination," and "ourselves fall victim to the insidious foes within our own souls that are far more deadly." "If we win our fight against the slave power from without, but lose it to the slave power within, what advantage have we?" "I can voice what thousands of other black folk think in their deepest hearts," said Imes. "We love America, but we can never betray our greatest love of humanity. And America is not the white man's country. It is God's country, and belongs to all humanity--black, yellow, red, white, brown."[24]

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[23] Age, March 10, 1928, July 6, 1929; Amsterdam, July 3, 1929, August 28, 1929, November 27, 1929; West Indian American, I, (January, 1928), 14.

In the 1920's, the migration of Negroes to Harlem was accompanied by an increasingly rapid movement into Brooklyn.[25]

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[24] *Amsterdam*, January 12, 1935, March 1, 1941; George Edmund Haynes, "Toward Interracial Peace," Research Memorandum prepared for the Carnegie-Myrdal Study of the Negro in America (Schomburg Collection), II-5; William Lloyd Imes, "Introduction," *The Black Pastures*, v; William Lloyd Imes, "God's Guiding Hand," *ibid.*, 42; William Lloyd Imes, "The Pastures in the Great Reaction," *ibid.*, 32.

[25] The table below shows Negro population in Brooklyn for each census year from 1890 to 1930, with the actual

Traditionally, Brooklyn had been one of the main areas of residence for the more affluent blacks, many of those living there having migrated from Manhattan. This movement continued to some extent in the 1920's, but it was overwhelmed by the large migration of poor blacks from outside the city. Though the history of the black community in Brooklyn was essentially separate from that of Harlem, the influence of some of the more important ministers was felt in Harlem. The most powerful and best known of Brooklyn's pastors became, like their counterparts in Manhattan, leaders of blacks in New York City as a whole and must be considered.[26]

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and the percentage increase in population in each decade.

		Increase in Decade	
Year	Population	Actual	Per cent
1890	10,287	2,192	27%
1900	18,367	8,080	79
1910	22,708	4,341	23
1920	31,912	9,204	41
1930	68,921	37,009	116

United States Census Office, Tenth Census, 1880: Population, I, 422; United States Census Office, Eleventh Census, 1890: Population, I, 470; United States Census Office, Twelfth Census, 1900: Population, I, 631; United States Census Office, Thirteenth Census, 1910: Population, I, 178; United States Census Office, Fourteenth Census, 1920: Population, III, 682; United States Census Office, Fifteenth Census, 1930: Population, II, 70.

[26] See Scheiner, Chapter 1, for the background of the Negro population in Brooklyn. One of the results of a location in proximity to Harlem has been that the Brooklyn Negro community has hardly been studied. It has been completely overshadowed by the diversity of the Harlem community despite the fact that its roots are much more deeply planted in the past.

One of the traditionally elite churches serving Brooklyn's black population was the Nazarene Congregational Church which traced its origins well into the nineteenth century. Nazarene called to its pulpit in 1920 the pastor of the First Congregational Church in Atlanta, Henry Hugh Proctor. Proctor had preached at First Congregational there for 26 years and had built the church into one of the best-known Negro churches in the country and a model institutional church. Reverend Proctor, who went to school with DuBois and was a friend of Washington, was considered by many to be among the most intelligent, articulate and progressive Negro leaders in America. Because of his background, then, Proctor quickly assumed a place as one of the leaders of black New York. In his 13 years in New York, however, his position as a black leader eroded so much that when he died in 1933 his pre-eminent stature was accepted by only a small group of affluent Negroes and liberal whites. He had succeeded in alienating a large part of the rest of the black community.

The crux of Proctor's problem was that he was unable to relate to the great mass of poor blacks congregating in New York. Though he wanted very much to help them and felt very strongly that it was his Christian duty to improve the whole community of which his church was a part, his accommodationist philosophy was not widely welcome in black

New York. Proctor's message and his actions were far too critical of blacks and far too admiring of whites to command attention for very long in the black community, no matter what his prestige.

In terms of the recognition accorded by the white community, Henry Hugh Proctor probably surpassed all his peers. He was one of 12 black students at Yale in the 1890's; he entertained American Presidents at his church in Atlanta; he was asked personally by General Pershing to go to France in 1918 to sustain the morale of the Negro soldiers; he was "cordially received" by President Coolidge in a private meeting in 1925; he wrote articles for the white press; he was often the guest preacher at white churches; he was, in 1926, the first Negro to be elected moderator of the New York Association of Congregational Churches; he was one of the few Negroes listed in Who's Who in America; and, he was honored by a funeral that attracted 5,000, many of whom were white. Still, the failure of Henry Proctor was that he remained largely unheeded in the black community.[27]

Henry Hugh Proctor's biography was similar to a number of the older ministers, and, indeed, since he was 52 when he came to Brooklyn, he belonged to the earlier generation.

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[27] Age, July 4, 1925, May 22, 1926; Amsterdam, February 4, 1925, May 19, 1926, May 17, 1933; The New York Herald Tribune, August 16, 1931, August 17, 1931, August 18, 1931; Henry Hugh Proctor, Between Black and White; Autobiographical Sketches (Boston, 1925), 157; The Spokesman, II (June, 1926), 12; Who's Who in America (35 vols., Chicago, 1899-1968), XVI, 1810.

He was born in a backwoods cabin in Tennessee in 1868, the fifth child of his newly emancipated parents. Despite the privations of his early life, he spoke fondly of his rural upbringing as "just the right kind of life for a growing boy. The cornfield was my gymnasium, the river my bathtub, and the awe-inspiring sky of stars my moving picture. I had plain food, plenty of sleep, and an abundance of fresh air." He walked five miles to attend a country school three months a year, held in a log cabin which "was well ventilated; one could throw a cat between the logs, and never touch a hair." Later the family moved into town and the young man who had expressed an unusual interest in learning was able to complete his common school training and begin teaching. An interest in the ministry drove him to attend Fisk College in Nashville. Working at almost any job available to earn the necessary funds to pay for his education, he finished Fisk in 1891 after seven years. From there he went to Yale Divinity School, where he received his B.D. in 1894 and from Yale directly to the pulpit of the First Congregational in Atlanta.[28]

While in Atlanta Proctor always maintained excellent relations with the white community. "I never attempted a good thing for my people but that I found some Southern white man by my side helping me do it," he related in his autobiography. The Atlanta Church he led claimed that all of its membership was literate, that two-thirds owned their own homes and that none had ever been in prison. Though in his younger days Proctor had attacked segregation strongly, he was by the turn of the century an active supporter of Booker T. Washington, who, in turn, helped him raise money for First Congregational. Proctor was instrumental in bringing calm to the black community during and after the 1906 riot. He was highly lauded for his role by moderate whites as well as by Washington.

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[28] Proctor, Between Black and White, 3-39; undated clipping, Brooklyn Daily Eagle, in Henry Hugh Proctor Pamphlet File (Schomburg Collection).

It was out of his experience with the riots that Proctor developed his ideas for making First Congregational into an institutional church. He felt that in order to fight the moral corruption destroying the lives of those in the city, the church must take a more active part in the everyday lives of the population. "Contrary to popular conception," Proctor wrote, "it is not the divine objective to increase the population of heaven, but to improve the breed on earth." With the help of the friendly whites in Atlanta, Proctor raised about $50,000 and built a new church. Proctor's experiment soon became known beyond Atlanta and his church was visited by Presidents Roosevelt and Taft, praised by Booker T. Washington and even studied by theological students from the North who concurred in the judgment made by one that "without exception white or black it is the most progressive church I saw in the South." The church contained a gymnasium, library, kindergarten, night school, vocational training school, employment agency and working girls home. From his very successful experience in Atlanta, Proctor was attracted to the pulpit of the Nazarene Congregational by a higher salary and by a chance to bring to the people of New York the benefits of his experience with the institutional church. He recognized that the future would bring increased black migration to the large cities of the North and felt that it was vital that ministers of his stature and experience do all they could to help make this urban community as healthy as possible.[29]

Upon his arrival in New York, Reverend Proctor began talking about his ideas for building a new Nazarene Congregational Church which would be the "business, social and religious center of Brooklyn's Negro community." He wanted full recreational facilities, stores, a hospital and dormitories for young people. In 1920, he estimated the cost at $250,000, a sizeable amount for a congregation of only

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[29] Henry Hugh Proctor, "The Negro Church," in William Holloway, ed., Whither the Negro Church? (New Haven, 1932), 31; Proctor, Between Black and White, 91-174; Booker T. Washington, The Story of the Negro: The Rise of the Race from Slavery (2 vols., New York, 1909), I, 348; Carroll, 17-18; Lewis, "Social Service in Negro Churches," 20; Meier, 222.

700. Although Proctor never gave up his dream of building a model church for Brooklyn, his plans went unfulfilled. Nazarene did move into larger quarters in 1926 when it bought the property of a white Universalist Church for $117,500, but Proctor was never able to raise the funds necessary to fulfill the aspirations of his dream. In 1929, the church had 800 members and yearly receipts of only $14,500, hardly enough to support an ambitious institutional program. After he died, the Nazarene congregation was forced to vacate its premises when unable to meet payments on the mortgage.[30]

In the North, Proctor spoke positively about the value of a fully integrated society. He spoke with pride of the black accomplishments since emancipation. Before a white audience in 1926, he stressed the note of Negro advancement:

> There is a new Negro in the land. Possessing nothing at his manumission, he is now worth two billion dollars. Numbering four million at emancipation, he has now increased to twelve million. Set free practically illiterate, he has wiped out eighty-five percent of his illiteracy. Confined formerly to a single section, he now lives in every part of the republic....
>
> He is proud of his race, his color and his

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[30] Age, February 7, 1920, November 13, 1926, June 23, 1934; Amsterdam, November 10, 1926, April 27, 1927, October 12, 1927, March 5, 1930; Greater New York Federation of Churches, The Negro Churches of Brooklyn, New York (New York, 1931), 5-9; Nazarene Congregational Church, "Sunday Bulletin," February 27, 1927.

> hair. He seeks not favor, but a fair field; not alms, but opportunity; not pity, but a square deal; not coddling, but co-operation.

To black people, Proctor emphasized the values of hard work, thrift, devotion to duty, dignified behavior and hope for the future. He was a man of incredible optimism. Conditions of the colored people were always improving, whites were always showing evidence of "increasing liberality." He could see good in almost anything. To the black soldiers given the shunned task of burying the unburied after the war, he preached: "Boys, I am proud of you. You have done the most sacred task of the war. What others have refused to do, you have done willingly and beautifully....America will not forget." On top of the optimism, he hammered on the theme of obedience--obedience of a church member to his pastor, of a son to his father, of a worker to his employer, of a student to his teacher, of a citizen to his government.[31]

He was often critical of what he considered the unhealthy and morally detrimental behavior of the poorer blacks he saw flocking to New York in the 1920's. He feared that their behavior would stir up the old prejudices in the minds of the whites and work against the progress of the "respectable" Negroes to whom Proctor was committed. Many Negroes, however, resented Proctor's criticism of the black newcomers and considered his views too indicative of interest in pleasing the white community. The feelings came to a head early in 1930 when Proctor in a newspaper interview condemned the unhealthy and immoral night life spreading to the "colored sections of Brooklyn," and took a condescending view toward the Harlem community. "The better class of colored people in Manhattan want to get away from the vicious conditions in the colored sections there and so they move to Brooklyn," he told the reporter. But, if conditions in Brooklyn were allowed to become as bad as in Harlem, then "disease and crime will become prevalent as they are in Harlem." This, Proctor felt, was a problem that should concern white people because "colored folk go into the white homes as domestic servants. And they carry their disease and crime with them."

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[31] Proctor, Between Black and White, 164; Age, April 17, 1926, April 16, 1927, March 15, 1930, March 29, 1930; Amsterdam, May 19, 1926, October 20, 1926, September 14, 1927, September 16, 1931; The New York Herald Tribune, August 16, 1931.

Proctor had used the unfortunate example to emphasize his argument for an end to housing discrimination and as part of a campaign to promote respect for prohibition, but the image of the crime- and disease-ridden colored domestic servant brought forth the rage of black leaders all over New York. Reverend Proctor was accused of courting the favor of whites to obtain money for his church which at the time was in the midst of an important fund-raising drive. A mass meeting, estimated to number 3,000, booed and hissed Proctor's name and cheered a resolution of protest drawn up by his fellow ministers. "It is most un-Christianlike for one to taint his own group with atrocities for favors among the powerful," said the resolution. "Dr. Proctor's method is against us. Almost every time he speaks to anyone of the white race he apologizes for the black race."[32]

From this time until his death in 1933, Reverend Proctor was almost totally ineffective in the larger black community. Though still accorded the attention and respect due a leading Negro by whites, the opinion of black New Yorkers toward Reverend Proctor was well summed up by Reverend George Frazier Miller, pastor of St. Augustine's Protestant Episcopal Church in Brooklyn. "God intends that we stand upon our feet as men and not grovel for favors of the rich and those in power at the expense of the race."[33]

Brooklyn's largest black church by the close of the 1920's was Holy Trinity Baptist and the size was largely attributable to the popularity of its pastor, Thomas S. Harten. Virtually unknown when he came to New York in 1922, Harten quickly rose to prominence on the strength of his fiery sermons and his protest marches. Before the decade was over, he was a power to be reckoned with in Brooklyn politics and by the early 1930's was an officer of the National Baptist Convention. Harten's personality earned him many headlines and a hugh following, and the size of Holy Trinity grew in proportion to his fame. It was clear that he was the type of minister who appealed to the black masses who flocked to Brooklyn in much greater numbers after World War I.

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[32] Age, March 8, 1930, March 15, 1930, March 29, 1930; Amsterdam, March 5, 1930, March 12, 1930, July 30, 1930.

[33] Age, March 8, 1930.

Thomas Harten was born in South Carolina about 1890 and before coming to New York was a travelling evangelist who made his home in Boston. One would surmise from his numerous criticisms of "educated Negroes" that his own formal education was limited. He was called to serve Holy Trinity after conducting a four-week revival at neighboring Fleet Street A.M.E.Z. Church in 1922. He came to Holy Trinity an unknown quantity except for his preaching ability which by all accounts was electrifying.[34]

Harten's sermons, some of which lasted over two hours and ended in a frenzy with "men and women shouting for joy," first attracted public attention when he was summoned to court in 1923 as a result of charges by neighbors of the church that Harten's services "took on the character of a public nuisance." Later, in 1923, Reverend Harten was again in court charged with throwing a chair at two of his flock who had criticized him for singling them out in a sermon as card players and crap shooters. Harten had a knack of turning headlines such as these into personal capital. The couple who sued him lost their court case and their slander suit, but Harten publicly forgave them. "I have no desire to even collect those damages which are due me. My only wish is to return good for evil," he told his congregation. In 1937, a Brooklyn woman brought false paternity charges against Harten. He responded in the pulpit by attributing these charges to his recent exposure of a "prominent New York rabbi" as a rapist of a Negro woman. Now, he claimed, white men were trying to persecute him for his protection of Negro womanhood. A month later, the woman who made the charges stood before Holy Trinity's congregation and called Reverend Harten "the greatest friend that the Negro race has today, especially helpless men and women." She had falsely accused him, she said, because she hoped he would become the child's father and "make him governor of the state or president of the United States."[35]

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[34] Ibid., July 4, 1925; Amsterdam, August 12, 1931, January 17, 1934; Boris, II, 169. The available sources provided no other biographical information on Harten before his call to Holy Trinity.

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[35] Age, October 27, 1923, January 26, 1924, May 8, 1926, May 15, 1926, September 4, 1937, October 9, 1937; Amsterdam, May 12, 1926, January 5, 1927, April 11, 1928.

But Thomas Harten became known to New York for more than long fiery sermons and court cases. In 1925, he formed the National Equal Rights League to organize the growing protest of Negroes in Brooklyn against unfair treatment by New York police. Harten led marches on Borough Hall in the 1920's and personally aided the cases of several black women who asserted that they had been assaulted by policemen. Harten also used the auspices of the National Equal Rights League and later his Afro-Protective League to protest against lynching, segregation in government offices and discrimination at public places and to press for legislation against these outrages. Throughout the 1920's, Harten earned a reputation as a militant defender of the rights of black people, especially black people farthest down the social and economic scale.[36]

Harten's protests often bordered on the demagogic, especially when speaking before a large crowd at a protest meeting. His demands, at least as stated before his audiences, were among the most militant of the 1920's. His basic appeal was to black pride and to the necessity of banding together to pressure for changes. On one occasion, at a mass meeting protesting police brutality in 1929, he suggested that one of the best ways for blacks to check "inhumane and brutal treatment, is for the Negroes to get together, stick together and, if necessary, die together." In 1927, he told the Citizens Welfare Council, a group pressing for racial equality:

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[36] Age, July 25, 1925, March 20, 1926, April 3, 1926, January 21, 1928, January 28, 1928, March 29, 1930, June 20, 1931; Amsterdam, July 22, 1925, July 29, 1925, July 21, 1926, February 23, 1927, October 3, 1928.

> Black men should stand ready to fight and to die for their rights. When Negro leaders are too cowardly to protect their race, the sooner they go to hell, the better off they'll be.
>
> We should make larger demands on the officials of the city. We should demand Negro guards and Negro ticket sellers and cashiers in the subways.... We should demand Negro gas meter readers. The gas company objects on the grounds that white women object to Negroes coming into their homes. That is an outrageous, diabolical, hellish lie! Yet they don't object to Negroes delivering the mail.
>
> It is an unwelcome fact that the Negro has been largely responsible for his present condition, chiefly by waiting for the crumbs that fall from the white man's table.

Harten's speeches, however, were stronger than his actions, for he was unable to sustain any of his protests for very long periods of time. Most seriously, he was never able to form a continuing organization that could have welded the black masses to which he appealed into a viable pressure group.[37]

Like so many other black leaders of the 1920's, Reverend Harten devoted a good deal of his time to politics. He used the leadership capital he had amassed in the protests to build his political power in Brooklyn. To Harten, politics offered the best means of achieving his objectives for the black masses. If black men were elected to office, conditions on all fronts would improve. He publicly supported candidates and exhorted his congregation to vote for his choices; but, more than that, he actively worked at the grass roots through the existing party structures and his own organizations. Though never successful at winning office, he was a power that white politicians were forced to take into consideration by the end of the 1920's. Harten was one of the earliest and most vociferous of black New York leaders to switch his allegiance to the Democratic Party at the beginning of the 1930's.[38]

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[37] Amsterdam, June 1, 1927, September 25, 1929.

Using a fundamentalist gospel and histrionic techniques, Thomas Harten reached a large number of people in the 1920's with a message that emphasized black dignity and equality. Like many of his successful counterparts in Manhattan, he combined a native emotional religion with an active and uncompromising stand for equal rights. His difficulties were also similar to many other black leaders in that he could not sustain his mass support without any significant progress toward the goals he sought. Progressively in the 1930's, Harten became more an emotional revivalist and less a crusader for equal rights, and his position as a community leader was steadily eroded.[39]

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[38] Age, July 4, 1925, April 7, 1928; Amsterdam, March 23, 1927, October 31, 1928, September 17, 1930, October 8, 1930, October 31, 1930.

Other important ministers who came to Brooklyn in the 1920's included William C. Brown of the Fleet Street A.M.E.Z. Church, who was elected an A.M.E.Z. bishop in 1936; James B. Adams of Concord Baptist, an important figure in Negro Republican politics; and George Shippen Stark of Siloam Presbyterian Church. But their influence was not as great nor were they as well known in the Harlem community as Proctor or Harten.

The new ministers who came to New York in the 1920's were in many ways quite similar to those who came in the first two decades. Though perhaps farther from the actual experience of slavery, most were born in the South and brought up in rural circumstances. On the other hand, most were better educated, having attended either one of the Southern black colleges or Northern universities such as Yale or Columbia. Most were self-made men and firmly believed in the American ethic of individualism and hard work as the necessary solution to the racial problem. All were optimistic about the prospects for continued progress in the future, an optimism that the success-laden atmosphere of the 1920's seemed to encourage. Although a large number of new ministers came to Harlem in the 1920's, it must be remembered that the religious scene was still largely dominated by the older ministers--A. Clayton Powell, Hutchens Bishop, Frederick Cullen, James W. Brown, William W. Brown, William Hayes and George Sims. We must turn, then, to a consideration of the role of the ministers, old and new, in the rapidly growing and rapidly changing Harlem community of the 1920's.

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[39] Age, March 2, 1940, December 28, 1940.

CHAPTER V

AN ERA OF OPTIMISM: THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE LEADING CLERGYMEN IN THE HARLEM COMMUNITY OF THE 1920's

The role of the leading black minister and his church in the 1920's was much affected by the mood of postwar Harlem. During the decade of the 1920's, Harlem established itself as the foremost black community in the United States, possibly in the world. The mood of Harlem in the 1920's, at least on the surface, was an optimistic one. Harlem blacks were ready to seize the opportunity afforded by the more liberal and more prosperous Northern city; they were ready to take part in the good things of American life. Not at all at odds with American values, most black leaders of the 1920's expressed the hope only that black people be given a chance to prove themselves within the system. Indeed, many black leaders were among the system's staunchest defenders.

Even Harlem's intellectuals felt in the 1920's a sense of hope, a sense that for the first time black men were getting a chance to control their own destinies. They expressed a sense of pride in being black. For all their social criticism, the writers of the Harlem Renaissance evoked essentially an optimistic tone, one evident even in the work of such writers as Alain Locke, Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, none of whom could be accused of being apologists for the society. "The Negro's situation in

Harlem is without precedent in all his history in New York," said James Weldon Johnson in his history of Negro New York written at the end of the 1920's. "Never before has he been so securely anchored, never before has he owned the land, never before has he had so well established a community life."[1]

Harlem's leading ministers shared in this optimism of the 1920's. Former rebel, Reverdy Ransom, soon to be an A.M.E. bishop, struck the keynote of the era when he told the congregation at Mother Zion in 1923 that he was "filled with hopefulness as regards the material, spiritual and intellectual uplift of our people." Boiling underneath this surface calm and optimism, however, the hard realities of Harlem life were less encouraging. Little headway was being made in acclimating the rural migrants to the city. Economic, social and political opportunities for the mass of black people were severely limited. Life for large numbers of Harlemites was a life of poverty and degredation, and it was not improving at a perceptible rate. At base, Harlem was a community not well prepared for the economic depression that ended the 1920's.[2]

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[1] Johnson, Black Manhattan, 159.

[2] Age, October 13, 1923. See Osofsky, 127-187, for the best overall account of Harlem during the 1920's. See also Ottley and Weatherby, 209-264.

In terms of their theology, most of New York's leading black ministers held to the traditional fundamentalism in this period. This fundamentalism had both an optimistic and a pessimistic side. It was reflected in their concern over the excessive materialism of the population, and a great deal of attention was paid to the sins of dancing, theatre and movie attendance and drinking. Revival services were still very popular. Most of the churches held at least one extended revival each year, usually with guest pastors. Every minister had several popular sermons which were repeated for revivals and special meetings. Powell's "The Valley of Dry Bones" was perhaps the best known. He depicted Harlem as full of "dry bones"--the "spiritually deceased" who had died from "temper, impatience, running questionable lodging houses, lying, adultery, poolroom, barroom, and ballroom, and most because they didn't attend church." Only the word of God could make the dry bones live and could save the world from a spiritual death for all. "'O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." Thomas Harten's favorite revival act was to assume the position of "Heaven's District Attorney" and prosecute the devil.[3]

"Fire and brimstone" sermons that depicted the realities of an eternity spent in hell were common. One of the more extreme, Reverend M. C. Strachan of the Harlem Seventh Day Adventist Church, said in 1925 that he used to believe in "the doctrine of endless misery for the wicked," but after careful study of the Bible, he had changed his views. Now he believed that "the wicked will be annihilated by the fires of the judgment." The battle over evolution was waged as fervently in Harlem churches as in the courthouse at Dayton, Tennessee. Ministers warned their congregations of the "dangers of discarding the old path marked out in the Bible for the new and untried nostrums of science." Of evolution, Strachan said, "Don't believe a word of it. The whole scheme is the devil's highway to the wilderness....People of intelligence should refuse to believe that their ancestors were primordial germs."[4]

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[3] A. Clayton Powell, "The Valley of Dry Bones," reprinted sermon, in A. Clayton Powell Pamphlet File (Schomburg Collection); Age, May 7, 1925.

This fundamentalism of the 1920's did not, however, emphasize so much the wages of sin as it did the happiness of a life lived by the gospel. "Ministers should think of themselves as ministers of 'Good News' for this is really the meaning of the gospels," said Reverend Oliver of Rush Memorial A.M.E.Z. Church. Reverend Bolden told his congregation in 1925:

> Today as we observe the interdependence of groups, of business and of nations, the growing spirit of community, of state and national, and

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[4] Age, January 26, 1924; Amsterdam, February 18, 1925, January 5, 1927.

> international cooperation and understanding and the tendency towards international justice and a well trained good conscience we feel that there is a spiritual movement on towards observing the will of God our Heavenly Father.

Ministers such as Ransom and Powell saw in the emotional approach to religion the "real contribution of the Negro race to American life." For Powell, the Jews had nationalized religion, the Romans organized it, the Greeks philosophized it and the Anglo-Saxons individualized it, leaving the Negro to emotionalize Christianity. "I can never be moved from the opinion that the colored man was placed in America by the providence of God to teach the white man the meaning of genuine Christian love and sympathy."[5]

There had always been an element in black Christianity that emphasized the necessity of viewing the hardships of life as a test and a preparation for heaven, and, thus, preached optimism in the face of adversity. "Through suffering you will become perfect." "Earth's troubles provide the material for the music of Heaven." In the 1920's, with the adversity reduced, there seemed even more room for optimism. Such a theology also strongly stressed the necessity of submission to authority as a proper

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[5] Age, July 11, 1925, July 10, 1926; Amsterdam, April 11, 1923; A. Clayton Powell, "The Colored Man's Contribution to Christianity and When It Will Be Made," reprinted sermon, in A. Clayton Powell Pamphlet File (Schomburg Collection).

Christian attitude. "Learn to listen to someone who knows better than yourself. Take the council given by ministers, God's representatives and live in peace and happiness." "Be ye faithful until death and the Lord has said He will give you a crown of life."[6]

By no means, however, was fundamentalism the only theological approach of Harlem's leading ministers. As in the past, there were ministers who expressed a more liberal theology, notably William Imes, Hutchens Bishop and Ethelred Brown. They argued for the necessity of coming to terms with the scientific knowledge of the day and for concern with more important question than the nature of the all-consuming fire on judgment day. Ethelred Brown, of Hubert Harrison Memorial Church, made criticism of fundamentalism one of his major themes, contending that its effect in the modern world was, in fact, anti-Christian.

> There is a hell...the hell of a convicting conscience, the hell in which our better self sits in judgment and lashes our very soul for the responsibilities undischarged, the privileges abused, the opportunities wasted, for the wrongs done in trust and confidences betrayed, in reputations blasted, in homes forever ruined....From this hell none of us should wish to be saved, for only in its flames may we be purified.

The essence of the liberal argument was that religion needed to pay attention to the social realities of everyday life, that it had to serve a purpose in bettering one's life on earth rather than emphasizing the rewards of the afterlife.[7]

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[6] Age, January 26, 1924, April 17, 1926, August 6, 1927; Mays, The Negro's God, passim.

But this social gospel point of view was not restricted to the small group of liberals who accepted scientific evolution and who learned to live with dancing and the movies. Most of the leading ministers who espoused a fundamentalist approach also accepted the idea that the church and the minister had an obligation to play an important role in the improvement of the quality of life of their communicants. Thus, men like Powell, W. W. Brown and Harten, who preached native fundamentalism along with the social gospel, represented not the exception but rather the pattern that most black ministers followed. "A New Testament Church," said A. Clayton Powell in a sermon in 1923, "is one which supplies the needs of the people in Harlem whether they be social, economic, or spiritual....If I had no shoes on my feet I would not want any of you to tell me about the golden slippers of the new Jerusalem."[8]

The larger churches continued the pattern set in the first decade of the century and supplied myriad services to the community, from the more than 40 clubs and organizations of Mt. Olivet and the economic activities of Metropolitan Baptist and Refuge Church of Christ to the full-fledged institutional programs of Abyssinian, St. Philip's and St. Mark's. A survey made in 1929 found that 17 churches in Harlem had Boy Scout troops, 15 had Girl Scouts, 15 supplied some sort of health service, usually visiting nurses, nine provided help for the unemployed of the church and six had groups to aid the poor. Several, including Emmanuel A.M.E. and Grace Congregational, provided day nurseries, and almost all churches had some sort of part-time educational program, often in the form of evening high school courses, vocational courses such as domestic science or printing, or a lyceum. Usually, these activities and services were limited to members of the congregation.[9]

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[7] Ethelred Brown, "Good Men in Hell," reprinted sermon, in Gumby Collection (Columbia University).

[8] Amsterdam, February 28, 1923.

Only the well-endowed St. Philip's and St. Mark's and the well-organized Abyssinian had buildings adequate for a full complement of institutional activities. The St. Philip's edifice included a gymnasium and an auditorium, and St. Mark's, a gymnasium and community house. Reverend Powell was awarded a Bronze Medal from the Harmon Foundation in 1929 for his service to his church and to his community, and was cited for setting an example "for financing religious and social church activities among Negroes." By the end of the 1920's, Abyssinian had over 50 clubs and organizations meeting on a regular basis, a Red Cross unit, a night school, a weekly lyceum, provided a regular schedule of athletic activities, employment aid and help to the sick and poor, and owned an old people's home. Reverend Powell even endorsed the beginning of a dramatic club, reversing his long opposition to the theatre.[10]

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[9] Greater New York Federation of Churches, Negro Churches in Manhattan, 18; Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, passim.; Age, January 1, 1927, June 22, 1929; Amsterdam, February 18, 1925, August 12, 1925, January 22, 1930.

Despite the achievements of Powell, Bishop and Brooks, as well as the attempts of Proctor, Bell and other leading ministers to duplicate institutional work in their own smaller churches, the established Harlem churches failed to meet their potential in the 1920's in terms of institutional activities. Several reasons explain this inadequacy. In the first place, the rapid increase in newcomers made the task increasingly difficult. Furthermore, having just moved to Harlem before the decade began, the community and the churches were not well enough established to meet the heavy burdens that serving the many new migrants imposed. The churches were forced to spend large sums for property and new buildings and often, since the communicants were poor, did not have extra funds to expand their social services. In some cases much was expended in "conspicuous consumption" on the edifices, erecting showpieces rather than buildings serviceable to the community. The large number of storefronts took members and funds away from the established churches, without solving the prevailing social problem. Internal and denominational disputes constituted another reason. And some churches were prisoners of conservative fundamentalism and refused to open their buildings for anything but religious services.

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[10] The Church Magnet, I (December 14, 1930), 3; Age, October 3, 1925, January 24, 1928, May 19, 1928; Amsterdam, January 8, 1930; Sydney H. French, "The Harmon Foundation," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--Intellectual Attainments and Cultural Life of Negroes in New York City" (Schomburg Collection); Powell, Against the Tide, 176; A. Clayton Powell, "The Church and Social Work," Opportunity, I (January, 1923), 15.

All of these factors combined to weaken the ability of the established churches to provide solutions for the community's problems and to meet the needs of the newly arriving migrants and the young people. Perhaps the most serious indictment of the established churches of the 1920's was that they largely failed to help assimilate these newcomers into the community. The Amsterdam had already editorialized in 1926:

> Why do not the churches put recreation on their programs of religious educational activities and see to it that their church doors are open, not only on Sundays for the grown-ups to get happy

> and shout and for class and prayer meeting, but every day and night that the community may be served and the young people saved.[11]

Harlem's churches spent a great deal of time and money increasing the size of their physical property in the 1920's. As the size of the congregations grew, pressure to expand and improve the physical facilities increased. It was argued that unless facilities were improved membership growth would stagnate, a sure sign of a poor minister and a sinful congregation. Most ministers and governing boards were forced to mortgage their property in order to finance the expansion, but most felt that the risk was sound since expanded facilities would mean increased membership which in turn would mean increased receipts. A sizeable portion of the funds went for the frills of religion--marble pulpits and plush carpeting. This trend reflected the speculative and materialistic mania that gripped all of America in the 1920's. In such an atmosphere, community service was subordinated. More and more, the quality of a church and a minister was assessed in terms of ornate furnishings, yearly receipts and rate of return on invested capital. A very common charge against a minister released by his congregation was that his policies had retarded the growth of the church.

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[11] Amsterdam, August 18, 1926.

One of the most important criteria by which A.M.E. pastors were judged by their presiding elders and bishops was their money-raising ability. An historian of the church wrote in 1916 that the rule had gained permanency that each year the pastor in charge of each church should exceed the funds of the previous year. "His ministerial standing as an efficient pastor in the estimation of his brethren and special Episcopal head, depends upon his surpassing his predecessor in Dollar Money in his first year." The boom ended for Harlem's churches, as it did for the rest of the society, in 1929. The churches were left facing the Depression with a total debt of almost $2,000,000. St. Mark's owed $275,000, Mt. Olivet, $217,000, Mother Zion, $165,000, Union Baptist, $130,000 and Mt. Calvary Methodist Episcopal, $118,000. Abyssinian, on the other hand, was debt-free. Even before the Depression hit, these churches were spending a major part of their receipts to service and repay the debt they had contracted, and, thus, they had difficulty expanding their institutional activities no matter how desperately the community needed them.[12]

The following table indicates the significant material aspects of the important New York churches in 1929: [13]

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[12] Age, November 13, 1926, June 4, 1927; Powell, Against the Tide, 78-79; John Jenifer, Centennial Retrospect History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Nashville, 1916), 280; The New York Herald Tribune, February 11, 1930.

[13] Greater New York Federation of Churches, Negro

Church	Size	Expenses	Property Value	Debt	Last Major Improvement
Abyssinian Baptist	8000	$48,000	$500,000	-	1923
Metropolitan Baptist	4021	23,103	200,000	$49,000	1918
Mother A.M.E.Z.	3500	50,000	525,000	165,000	1925
St. Philip's Episcopal	2864	41,961	675,550	18,000	1909
St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal	2075	55,000	550,000	275,000	1926
Union Baptist	2000	27,000	211,000	130,050	1926
Bethel A.M.E.	2000	25,000	150,000	-	1914
Salem Methodist Episcopal	1800	35,000	600,000	80,000	1924
Mt. Olivet Baptist	1600	14,520	500,000	217,000	1925
St. James Presbyterian	1505	25,000	245,000	95,000	1927
Emmanuel A.M.E.	1100	17,500	150,000	62,000	1928
Refuge Church of Christ	900	10,000	100,000	18,000	1919ff.
Grace Congregational	750	14,000	75,000	36,000	1923
Holy Trinity Baptist	3100	26,000	200,000	30,000	?
Nazarene Congregational	820	14,500	250,000	35,000	1926

Churches in Manhattan, 11-18; Greater New York Federation of Churches, The Negro Churches of Brooklyn, New York, 11, 13; Age, December 9, 1909, May 8, 1913, January 10, 1920, July 16, 1921, January 13, 1923, March 17, 1923, April 7, 1923, May 26, 1923, May 24, 1924, October 11, 1924, September 26, 1925, October 17, 1925, May 22, 1926, October 30, 1926, November 13, 1926, June 4, 1927, June 30, 1928, June 8, 1929; Amsterdam, September 16, 1925, November 10, 1926, February 19, 1938.

The rapid proliferation of cults and storefront churches in the 1920's served further to weaken the established churches, not only in terms of potential financial support but because of the image they presented of clerical activities.[14] These smaller churches drew prospective members away from the larger churches, yet were unable or unwilling to provide anything other than religious services. They proved to be especially attractive to the newly arrived migrants who often found the larger churches too impersonal and too far-removed from the religion with which they were familiar. The storefront pastors, called jacklegs, preached with few exceptions an emotional and fundamentalist gospel. Largely uneducated, but with a sharp instinct for leadership and financial gain, the jacklegs and the cult leaders often took advantage of their guileless flocks. Community leaders, including the established ministers, were extremely critical of these men, accusing them of giving a bad reputation to all black ministers and of undermining more serious efforts to better the community. Stories of errant ministers continually made front page copy in the Negro press.

One category of criticism was of the lack of training of the storefront ministers. This was referred to in an article in the Amsterdam in 1928:

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[14] The 1929 survey found that of 160 black churches in Harlem, 122 met in storefronts or residences. The membership of these 122 churches was estimated to be 12,895. As explained above, it is quite possible that this figure was underestimated. See note 2 in Chapter IV. Greater New York Federation of Churches, Negro Churches in Manhattan, 11-20.

> Rufus L. Perry, the Brooklyn lawyer, doubts that the Reverend C. M. Jones is an ordained preacher because Reverend Jones when examined as a witness in court, was unable to spell Deuteronomy, did not know how many books were in the Pentateuch, and thought Ananian and Sapphira were both men.
>
> If in the silence of the night you hear a rustling sound, do not be alarmed; it may be merely thousands of ministers turning the leaves of the Bible to see how Deuteronomy is spelled.

The two most common charges were allegations of sexual immorality and plots to defraud parishioners of money. For instance, in 1926, when 34 members of the Ever Living and Never Dying Church were arrested on charges of prostitution, it was brought out that Elder Robinson, who headed the church, had taught that salvation would come to parents by turning over all girl children to the church. Favorite money-raising schemes included the sale of nonexistent lots in New Jersey, collections for fake charities, borrowing money from parishioners and taking commissions from promoters for recommending worthless securities to church members. A common accusation was that many preachers were agents in the numbers racket.[15]

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[15] Age, March 24, 1923, February 9, 1924, July 12, 1924, March 21, 1925, February 20, 1926, November 20, 1926, January 23, 1929, November 16, 1929, November 29, 1930; Amsterdam, June 20, 1928; Raymond J. Jones, A Comparative Study of Religious Cult Behavior among Negroes with Special Reference to Emotional Group Conditioning Factors (Washington, 1939), 124-125.

Most of the preachers who made the front pages of the Age and the Amsterdam in this way headed small churches, but their reputation badly tarnished the image of all black ministers in the minds of both whites and blacks. The crux of the problem was posed by Ira DeA. Reid, who wrote in the mid-1920's:

> Where [established churches have] progressed in the type of ministers selected and in the reformation of the church program, [storefronts have] become stuffed with cast-offs and religious criminals who will not be denied. While the aggressive minority is pushing forward with intelligent and modern interpretation of a gospel that was once wholly emotionalized, the satellites have glittered with their emotional paroxysms and illusive and illiterate mysticisms.
>
> It is unfortunate that the efforts of sincere and well-established churches in Harlem, both small and large, have to be hampered by the manipulation of these groups--both orthodox and pagan--of the outer fringe. While the one steadily prods at social problems with instruments both spiritual and physical and methods religious and humanitarian, the others are saying, "Let us prey." And they do.

It would seem that the popular conception of the black minister has been formed with the storefront preacher in mind. Ironically, the image of the ignorant, lecherous and avaricious jackleg preacher was originally drawn by responsible black critics, but came to be applied to all black ministers.[16]

A number of honest and well-intentioned ministers were hampered by the lack of adequate training for their positions. Though the traditional claim that one needed only a "call" from the Lord to be ordained a minister was still strongly felt by storefront ministers, most leading ministers attended religious seminaries after their "call," and thus earned the B.D. degree. However, several studies made of the black divinity schools indicated that the training accorded in these schools was woefully inadequate to prepare the prospective minister to meet the kind of problems he would find in the cities of the North. These seminaries accepted students with little or no prior academic training, so that few seminary graduates had even the equivalent of a high-school education. Located almost exclusively in the South, the schools emphasized fundamentalist theology and accommodationist social, economic and political thought. This, as with the problems discussed above, served to lower the status of the ministry in the eyes of the community in the 1920's. Since so many ministers seemed to be out of touch with modern thinking and since so many had been held up to public ridicule or scorn, the minister, in general, in the 1920's was less and less the accepted and unrivalled leader of the black community. In his study of the Negro church in Chicago, the sociologist St. Clair Drake pointed out:

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[16] Ira DeA. Reid, "Let us Prey!" Opportunity, IV (September, 1926), 278.

> It does not take long for a migrant Negro to learn the wielders of power in the city; who can get relief for him; who can get him out of jail;

> who can secure a job. This is usually not the preacher. One does not even need a preacher to bury him or marry him, and children do not need to be christened.[17]

Despite their shortcomings, it was clear that the storefronts provided something lacking in the established churches, a sense of belonging, of identity, of importance. As the sociologist E. Franklin Frazier defined the problem, the storefront church represented "an attempt on the part of the migrants, especially from the rural areas of the South, to re-establish a type of church in the urban environment to which they were accustomed. They want a church, first of all, in which they are known as people." Reverend Powell recognized this early in his career, and his attempts to personalize the huge Abyssinian Church were one of the reasons it outdistanced all its rivals in membership gains in the 1920's. This kind of appeal also partly explains the high popularity of fraternal organizations in black communities, which supplied many of the same services as the churches, and which for some took the place of the church. Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) combined the ends of a fraternal organization, a benevolent society, a cooperative economic association, a church and a civil rights group, uniting its members around a pride in being black and appealing primarily to the newly arrived migrant. Reverend Powell understood Garvey's appeal and even credited him with favorably publicizing Harlem to black men everywhere.

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[17] St. Clair Drake, "The Negro Church and Associations in Chicago," Research Memorandum prepared for the Carnegie-Myrdal Study of the Negro in America (Schomburg Collection), 384; W. A. Daniel, The Education of Negro Ministers (New York, 1925), passim.; Jesse E. Moorland, The Demand and the Supply of Increased Efficiency in the Negro Ministry (Washington, 1909), passim.; Mays and Nicholson, 40; Benjamin E. Mays, "The Negro Church in American Life," Christendom, V (Summer, 1940), 389-390; Benjamin E. Mays, Fifty Years of Progress in the Negro Church (Pittsburgh, 1950), 3-4; DuBois, ed., The Negro Church, 190; Samuel Blizzard, "The Minister's Dilemma," Christian Century, LXXIII (April 25, 1956), 508; Ira DeA. Reid, "The Church and Education for Negroes," in Trevor Bowen, ed., Divine White Right (New York, 1934), 235; The Crisis, III (May, 1912), 24-25; Age, May 4, 1905, May 27, 1909, October 7, 1915, September 30, 1915.

> The coming to Harlem of Garvey...was more significant to the Negro than the World War, the Southern exodus and the fluctuation of property values. The cotton picker of Alabama, bending over his basket,and the poor ignorant Negro of the Mississippi delta, crushed beneath a load of prejudice, lifted their heads and said, "Let's go to Harlem to see this Black Moses."

Furthermore, Powell pointed out, Garvey was "the only man that ever made Negroes who are not black ashamed of their color."[18]

For the most part, however, black ministers were as critical and distrustful of Garvey as they were of the jacklegs and the cult leaders, especially after he obtained the services as U.N.I.A. chaplain of a highly respected and well-known Episcopal priest, Reverend George Alexander McGuire. McGuire, in 1921, originated the African Orthodox Church as a unit within the Eastern Orthodox Church. This served as the religious adjunct of the U.N.I.A. McGuire appealed to black members of other Harlem churches to desert the "white man's gods" and return to a church controlled by black men with a black Christ, a black Madonna and a white devil. The success of Garvey's appeal did indicate that beneath the surface of Harlem in the 1920's there were basic needs felt by a large number of people that were not being satisfied by the established groups in the society including the churches. Garvey threatened because he suggested radical solutions to the problems of Harlem, while Harlem's leaders, including the ministers, were dedicated to solutions achieved through the mechanisms of the established order. Thus, black nationalism was seen as dangerous often not because of its racist and emotional base, but because its popularity threatened those who had based their appeal on integration.[19]

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[18] E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York, 1964), 53; Neil Hickey and Ed Edwin, Adam Clayton Powell and the Politics of Race (New York, 1965), 21; Powell, Against the Tide, 71. For a full account of the Garvey movement and its appeal, see Edmund David Cronon, Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Madison, Wis., 1955).

A further problem for the established churches was the internal dissension with which some congregations were plagued. Harlem congregations sometimes split into contending factions and separate bodies over seemingly petty issues. The democratic organization of the Baptist bodies naturally led to controversies, usually over the support or rejection of an incumbent minister, but there was also a great deal of strife in the ecclesiastically controlled A.M.E. Church. This is illustrated in the controversies surrounding the activities of Reverend Montrose Thornton. The Bethel A.M.E. congregation in Manhattan split in 1920 over the transfer of Reverend A. R. Cooper and the assignment of Reverend Thornton, whose moral reputation was questioned. Bethel's trustees locked Thornton out, but a court order forced the opening of the church. Those opposed to Thornton then organized the Mt. Calvary Independent Methodist Church. Later it was discovered that the dissident trustees had been expending Bethel's funds illegally and feared that Thornton would expose them. Mt. Calvary Church meanwhile invested in a huge edifice and some business property, mortgaging themselves heavily. In 1925, the church filed a bankruptcy plea in court. The president of the Board of Trustees, Hannibal Shepard, who had managed the congregation's finances since its Bethel days, disappeared.[20]

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[19] Cronon, 69, 178-182; McKay, 162-163; Ottley and Weatherby, 213; Arthur C. Terry-Thompson, *The History of the African Orthodox Church* (New York, 1956), 43-53.

In 1925, Reverend Thornton was made presiding elder of the Long Island District of the A.M.E. Church, and the former presiding elder, Cain P. Cole, was made pastor of the Bethel Church in Brooklyn. Cole's appointment was opposed by a faction of Bethel's congregation who favored the former pastor, S. H. V. Gumbs. The Gumbs faction split away in 1925 to form Union Bethel A.M.E. Church. Presiding Elder Thornton recognized this church. In 1926, another controversy resulted when Thornton tried to investigate charges of incompetence leveled against Bridge Street A.M.E. pastor, Edward E. Tyler. As a result, Bishop William H. Heard removed Bridge Street Church from Thornton's jurisdiction and replaced it with Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. The congregation of Metropolitan Church then protested, and Heard finally removed Thornton as elder. Meanwhile, controversy arose again in Bethel in Manhattan, in 1925 and in 1929, each time over the replacement of a pastor.[21]

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[20] Age, July 3, 1920, September 4, 1920, March 17, 1923, April 19, 1924, August 22, 1925, December 5, 1925, May 1, 1926; Amsterdam, August 12, 1925.

The troubles of the A.M.E. Church were not limited to local factional disputes but extended through the ecclesiastical hierarchy to the Quadrennial Conferences and the ruling bishops. These factional difficulties reduced the influence of the A.M.E. Church which in the nineteenth century had commanded the allegiance and respect of a large part of the black masses in the Northern and border states.

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[21] *Age*, May 30, 1925, July 11, 1925, August 1, 1925, November 28, 1925, December 26, 1925, September 18, 1926, October 2, 1926, June 8, 1929.

During the period from 1890 to 1926, when black membership in all churches doubled, A.M.E. membership increased by only 20 per cent and by 1936 had declined to virtually the same level as it had been in 1890. One A.M.E. minister attributed the decline to the nature of the ministry. He wrote; "The Negro bishop of today who did not buy his office with his own money or the money of the church which passed through his hands is a rarity." Even Reverdy Ransom, militant social reformer of the early twentieth century, seemed to lose his interest in social betterment as he spent more time in the A.M.E. hierarchy. Though never accused of corrupt action, Ransom, as a bishop, was not the reformer that he had been as a minister.[22]

For the most part, the A.M.E. Quadrennial Conferences were political conventions concerned mainly "with the election of Bishops and General Officers" and with raising money to meet the general expenses of the denomination. The acrimony of the conferences and the large amount of time spent collecting money for the general expenses of the denomination did little to improve the popular image of the A.M.E. Church and its leadership. In all, the inability of the denominational machinery from top to bottom to function smoothly seriously weakened the ability of the individual congregations to meet the everyday problems of their communities. After all, a church which could not stabilize its own social order could offer little help toward stabilizing the social order of the larger community. Though the A.M.E. Church provided the best example, the A.M.E.Z., C.M.E. and Baptist denominations suffered also from the problems of factionalism, wasteful organization and inadequate national leadership. Like the jacklegs, officers and bishops of the large national denominations were often depicted as a negative force in the black community.[23]

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[22] Johnson, Johnson and Palmer, 269; D. Ormande Walker, quoted in ibid., 389; Age, May 24, 1924.

Despite the fact that they and their churches did not achieve their potential, on the whole, the leading black ministers continued to play a role as community leaders in the 1920's. As might be expected, this group were leaders in the various campaigns to improve the moral conditions of the Harlem community. Ministers played an active role in the campaign led by Fred Moore, publisher of the *Age*, in the early 1920's to stamp out the sale of

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[23] V. M. Townsend, *Fifty-Four Years of African Methodism* (New York, 1953), 55-59; Singleton, 162-169; Ransom, *Pilgrimage*, 272; *Christian Recorder*, June 6, 1901; *Age*, August 29, 1907, April 21, 1910, May 5, 1910, June 9, 1910, November 23, 1911, September 10, 1914, October 28, 1915, May 29, 1920, October 30, 1926; *Amsterdam*, May 16, 1928, May 23, 1928, October 30, 1929, December 11, 1929. The autobiography of Bishop William H. Heard, *From Slavery to Bishopric in the A.M.E. Church: An Autobiography* (Philadelphia, 1924), who was bishop of the New York Conference from 1913 to 1936, gives an interesting picture of the political machinations and materialistic concerns of some church leaders.

"hootch," a term for bootlegged alcoholic beverages, in Harlem. The easy availability of alcoholic beverages, despite prohibition, together with the attraction of its night clubs had given Harlem an appeal for well-to-do whites. This, however, was not the type of business vitality the ministers wished to stimulate in the community. The clergymen's opposition to "hootch" was based essentially on their desire to create a stable and independent black community in Harlem. The consumption of "hootch" not only lessened the ability of the poor and ignorant newcomer to achieve some dignity and contributed to the rise in crime and vagrancy, but its sale also attracted into the community the worst elements of white society. To A. Clayton Powell, "hootch" was "ruining our people financially, physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually." To William P. Hayes "hootch" sales led to "the ultimate breakdown of law and order and the handing over of the community to a conscienceless crew that would undermine the very foundations of our government." Alexander C. Garner in joining the campaign said:

> One's blood boils and ire runs riot when we see as we must the result of this demon--nothing but decay all around us. All self-respect, pride, yea, common decency, is dragged down and out and trampled upon--our men seem as vagabonds, as beings void of all honor.[24]

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[24] Age, October 7, 1922, October 27, 1923.

The ministers began action late in 1922 with a series of mass meetings and Sunday sermons and picked up moral fervor in early 1923 during the revival season. During this year the Age ran front page stories on the campaign, publicizing the names and addresses of stores and cabarets where "hootch" could be purchased and encouraging the community leaders to back the campaign to bring pressure upon the municipal authority to stamp out "hootch" sales. Some ministers broadened the campaign to oppose all forms of sin in Harlem including soothsaying, fortune-telling, dancing, theatre and movie attendance, gambling, vice, pool rooms and Sunday desecration and appealed to their congregations to refrain from such pleasures.[25]

On occasion, the campaign raised vital issues. Why, it was asked, did the law enforcement officials so diligently enforce the law against poor and powerless black individuals, while at the same time avoid so carefully the prosecution of the rich and powerful who openly flaunted the law? Some pointed to the fact that the men who profited from "hootch" sales, cabarets, pool halls and the numbers racket were outsiders, usually white, who had "no interest in the people of our group, except that of exploitation." The white community, it was felt, was more interested in preserving Harlem as a "den of iniquity" rather than in stimulating the building of a healthy and stable community. Against such forces, it is not surprising that the campaign petered out in 1924 having almost totally failed in stopping the sale of "hootch."[26]

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[25] Ibid., December 3, 1921, October 21, 1922, October 28, 1922, December 30, 1922, December 8, 1923, March 8, 1924, March 29, 1924.

The decade of the 1920's was not a period noted for its vigorous protest activities. Thomas Harten alone of the leading black ministers made protest a regular habit and attempted to form a broad-based organization to back up his protests. His National Equal Rights League centered its protests at first on the discriminatory and brutal treatment of blacks by the police. Harten led marches on Borough Hall, held mass protest meetings and personally defended individuals against the police and in the courts, but he could never stir up much support among the rest of New York's ministers and the organization failed. So also did the Afro-Protective League which he formed later in the 1920's. Although there were complaints of police unfairness to blacks at various times, a more typical reaction was that of Reverend J. D. Bushell: "I feel that the leaders of all groups should preach law and order, and help in every way to have it." Ministers were quick to criticize in their sermons open racial discrimination in education, religion, employment or housing, but rarely did they engage in any kind of direct action to bring pressure against such discrimination.[27]

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[26] Ibid., July 22, 1922, September 29, 1923, October 13, 1923, January 12, 1924, February 9, 1924, March 15, 1924, April 5, 1924, May 3, 1924, July 26, 1924, November 22, 1924, March 8, 1930.

Ministers also gave some vocal attention to national questions affecting the race, most importantly to the Dyer Anti-lynching Bill which was discussed in Congress several times in the 1920's. But conditions in New York did not allow much time for concern for the South. Further, the temper of the federal government was not inclined in the 1920's to take the lead in racial reform. So, on national matters as well, there was a good deal of drift; words, perhaps, but little action.[28]

Most importantly, the spirit of the 1920's being generally an optimistic faith that things would work out for the best given time and a stable and ordered community, attention was focused on providing institutions that would improve the local community rather than on protests dealing with the position of the black man in national life. The leading ministers actively supported the N.A.A.C.P. and the Urban League and raised money for the extension of the

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[27] Ibid., July 22, 1922, July 25, 1925, March 20, 1926, April 3, 1926, January 21, 1928, January 28, 1928; Amsterdam, July 22, 1925, July 29, 1925, August 31, 1927, January 23, 1929.

[28] Age, May 15, 1920, April 9, 1921, February 25, 1922, October 7, 1922, January 20, 1923, February 16, 1924, February 13, 1926; Amsterdam, February 16, 1927, February 23, 1927.

Presbyterian and the Harlem hospitals and the expansion of the Y.M.C.A. Over and over again these ministers dwelt on the theme of the necessity of establishing business enterprises and of the necessity of patronizing black-owned businesses. This was the land of opportunity and the best way of taking advantage of it was to open a business for oneself. "The Negro is not asking for any special favors," said A. Clayton Powell, "but he is pleading for fair play, footway, and elbow room while he 'runs the race with patience' and 'works out his own salvation with fear and trembling.'"[29]

Harlem's leaders had a model upon which to base their future plans, the larger white community around them. Although there was much rhetoric about the integrated society of the future, the thinking was mostly concerned with creating an independent and self-sufficient black capitalist community. Blacks did not wish to move into white communities, only to have decent living conditions in their own communities. They did not wish to join white churches, only to have strong and respected black churches. "The crux of the question is," 10 Harlem ministers said in resigning from the Board of Directors of the Harlem Y.M.C.A. in 1921, "shall white men dictate who colored men shall have to work with them and for them?" Thomas Harten called on Negroes to work together. "We will never be properly respected until we become creators of our own jobs, producers as well as consumers, and support every worthwhile Negro enterprise."[30]

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[29] Age, April 29, 1922, April 14, 1923, June 6, 1925, May 8, 1926, April 30, 1927, December 31, 1927, January 25, 1930; Amsterdam, June 3, 1925, June 17, 1925, January 18, 1928.

The theory sounded impressive, but in practice it worked less smoothly. Going into business was difficult without training and without capital. There were no black business schools, and discrimination, poor education and lack of funds made it difficult to attend a white business school. There were no black-owned commercial banks, and discrimination and lack of collateral made it difficult to obtain funds from the white banks. Some ministers, notably Lawson at Refuge, Bell at Williams, W. W. Brown at Metropolitan and Ethelred Brown at Hubert Harrison Memorial, called for and began cooperative projects in order to overcome some of the difficulties inherent in the American system. But none of these projects went very far nor did they capture the imagination of Harlem's masses. Others, such as William Imes, argued that the difficulties of creating a separate society were all the more reason to press for integration as an immediate goal. And, since many more blacks were workers rather than entrepreneurs, some ministers committed themselves to the task of bettering the conditions of the black working class. After all, said A. Clayton Powell, "no man can be moral in Harlem on $15 a week." Thus, a number of New York's leading black ministers supported the work of labor unions, especially the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In fact, A. Philip Randolph, who was never reticent in his criticism of Negro ministers in general for their traditional anti-union, pro-capitalist position, said of New York's leading pastors:

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[30] Age, May 7, 1921, May 20, 1922, July 5, 1930; Amsterdam, September 22, 1936, October 20, 1926, March 27, 1929, September 25, 1929, November 6, 1929; A. Clayton Powell, "Plea of a Self-Respecting Negro," in Lewis Garnett Jordan, Negro Baptist History U.S.A. (Nashville, 1930), 308-310.

> In the last three years I have had a rather splendid reception from the Negro church and in New York the Negro churches of practically all of the denominations have endorsed our Movement. In Chicago it is different. Chicago is not so clear on the question. There seems to be less idealism among the ministers toward any social movement than in New York.[31]

As Harlem became an increasingly black community in the 1920's, interest in black political representation continued to be an active concern of Harlem's leading ministers. Just as in economic activities, there was a prevailing faith in the viability and fairness of the system as it existed. Blacks did not demand changes, or new parties, or "civil rights" legislation, only a chance to represent themselves. They wanted an opportunity for black men to serve as congressmen, state legislators, aldermen and district leaders. They believed that such representation would insure that laws fair to all would be passed and that the black community would receive its share of political favors. Holding these basic assumptions, leading ministers were not reluctant to take an active part in the developing political processes of Harlem. Ministers, led by James W. Brown of Mother Zion, were active in the unsuccessful campaign of Charles Roberts for re-election as alderman for the Nineteenth District in 1921. Brown asked all Harlem ministers to call to the attention of their congregations that Roberts' opponent, Martin Healey, was injecting racism into the campaign. Healey, campaigning as a friend of the Negro in black sections of the Nineteenth, concentrated his campaign in white areas on the fact that Roberts was a Negro.[32]

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[31] New York Urban League, "Twenty-Four Hundred Negro Families in Harlem: An Interpretation of the Living Conditions of Small Wage Earners," (typescript, Schomburg Collection, 1927), 14; Rollin Lynde Hartt, "I'd Like to Show You Harlem!" The Independent, CV (April 2, 1921), 334-335; A. Philip Randolph, "The Negro Church and Economic Relations," in Holloway, 8; Brailsford R. Brazeal, The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters: Its Origin and Development (New York, 1946), 44; The West Indian American, I (January, 1928), 14; Age, December 7, 1918, November 24, 1923, October 4, 1924, November 28, 1925, December 10, 1927, April 7, 1928, May 25, 1929; Amsterdam, November 10, 1926, February 12, 1930, June 11, 1930, September 16, 1931.

Reverend Richard Bolden was the Republican candidate for State Assembly in the Nineteenth District in 1922, but his fellow ministers showed little enthusiasm for his candidacy and he lost. In 1924, James W. Brown became the first black delegate to represent New York at a Republican National Convention. Later that year, prompted partly by Reverends Frank Hyder and A. B. Cooper who ran and lost as insurgent candidates for the County Committee, the Republican Party nominated Charles Roberts to run for Congress from the Twenty-first District, the first black candidate of a major party for Congress from New York. Roberts was supported from the pulpit by most of Harlem's ministers and was endorsed by the Interdenominational Preachers Association. During the campaign he held mass meetings at Abyssinian, Mother Zion, St. James, Bethel and Grace. How effective the work of the ministers was can be questioned, but the fact that black Harlem compromised less than two-fifths of the heavily Democratic Twenty-first District and that many blacks voted Democratic made Roberts' defeat understandable.[33]

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[32] *Age*, October 15, 1921, July 29, 1922.

The active support of Harlem's leading ministers was an important factor in the election in 1927 of Republican Fred Moore as alderman from the Nineteenth District. His campaign strategy included gaining the support of Powell, J. W. Brown, Bolden, Imes, Bell, Sims and Nichols, all of whom endorsed Moore and urged their congregations to support him. Moore spoke from the pulpits of a number of

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[33] Ibid., February 23, 1924, April 5, 1924, July 26, 1924, August 2, 1924, September 20, 1924, October 18, 1924, November 1, 1924; Osofsky, 176-177.

Harlem churches on Sunday mornings during the campaign. After winning the election, Moore singled out the clergy for special praise, but also heaped scorn upon those "few Negro preachers of the 'jack-leg' type who will earn a little change during the campaign for giving expression to views favorable to the Democratic candidates."[34]

Ministers continued to be identified with the increased political activity of Harlem blacks in 1928. The Republican County Committee in 1928 offered Reverend William Hayes the nomination for Congress from the Twenty-first District, after strongly considering Reverend Powell. Hayes, however, declined in favor of his church duties. Ethelred Brown ran as the Socialist candidate for Congress from the Twenty-first. As some black leaders began openly to question the traditional loyalty to the national Republican Party, a few ministers, including Reverdy Ransom, advocated the election of Al Smith, whose record as governor of New York could not be held against him by Negroes. Fred Moore and other lay leaders now argued that Negro ministers like Ransom "meddled" too much in partisan politics, and one, Kelly Miller, claimed that "the whole race is put to shame and the religious world is made to blush to witness one great bishop as the close personal and political ally and beneficiary of a notorious wet and thither throwing the weight of his great influence on the side of the liquor demon." Reverend Imes argued that "neither of the major parties deserves the Negro support," and praised the tendency to move away from uncompromising loyalty to the Republicans. On the other hand, Reverend Harten, who had supported Democrats on the local level, was willing to "talk all night against Governor Smith."[35]

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[34] Age, September 3, 1927, October 29, 1927, November 5, 1927, November 12, 1927.

The most significant political move of the later 1920's, and one that was supported by the leading ministers, was the effort to wrest from white politicians the politically powerful position of district leader of both Republican and Democratic parties in the predominantly black Nineteeth and Twenty-first Assembly districts. Fred Moore, backed mainly by ministers--Powell, Sims, Ransom, Hayes, Imes, Garner, J. W. Brown and Nichols--began a movement in early 1928 to replace the Republican district leaders, Abraham Grenthal in the Nineteenth and Robert S. Conklin in the Twenty-first, with black leaders, Charles W. Fillmore and Charles W. B. Mitchell. Reverend Powell pointed out that the absence of black district leaders was a key reason why it was so difficult to unite the black vote. The movement forced a primary fight in 1929 over the district leadership positions. Although it cannot be doubted that the weekly front-page stories in the Age were the main source of publicity for the campaign, the work of the ministers was influential. Sermons were preached in behalf of the insurgents, pulpits were opened to the candidates themselves, Sunday collections were contributed to the campaign fund and church bulletins were filled with campaign rhetoric.

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[35] Ibid., April 7, 1928, August 4, 1928, August 11, 1928, September 15, 1928, September 29, 1928, November 10, 1928; Amsterdam, July 18, 1928, July 25, 1928, August 8, 1928, September 19, 1928, October 31, 1928. Ransom later revealed in his autobiography that Jim Farley strongly encouraged him to campaign for Smith in 1928. Ransom, Pilgrimage, 280-281.

D. Ward Nichols wrote in the Sunday bulletin of the Emmanuel A.M.E. Church:

> There is not a single difficulty in the path, except our own stupidity and lack of race consciousness. We have reached the place although some of us do not believe it, where we no longer need or require white leadership. Let's arise and seize it.

A. Clayton Powell pointed out in an article entitled, "Grenthal Must Go!," in the weekly magazine of the Abyssinian Church:

> The pastor wishes to call the attention of the members and friends living in the Nineteenth Assembly District to the fact that a fight is being waged between the forces of righteousness and certain unscrupulous politicians.

The Interdenominational Preachers Association called the contest "the very challenge we need as a race to conquer our petty divisions, and prove that we will not always allow ourselves to be divided and ruled by minority groups of other races." In endorsing Fillmore and Mitchell, the ministers in the Association pledged themselves "to preach and practice united effort and to help overcome this handicap to our political slavery here in Harlem." The Age backed away from its usual criticism of politically active ministers saying that the "church should be a source of instruction, not only spiritually, but in civics and politics as well." Leading ministers did not unanimously support the campaign. Richard M. Bolden called those who opposed Grenthal "crazy" and argued that the colored people of Harlem would get better results with white leadership bargaining for them. In the Nineteenth District the campaign was successful; the insurgents won a two-to-one victory and Charles W. Fillmore became New York City's first black district leader. In the Twenty-first Assembly District an agreement was reached dividing the district into two parts with Conklin heading one, and Mitchell the other.[36]

In the regular election in 1929,Harlem elected two black aldermen and two black assemblymen, but Hubert Delany lost his bid to become congressman from the Twenty-first

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[36] Age, February 25, 1928, March 3, 1928, March 10, 1928, July 14, 1928, August 4, 1928, September 15, 1928, June 29, 1929, July 20, 1929, August 3, 1929, August 31, 1929, September 7, 1929, September 14, 1929, September 21, 1929.

District. Although Delany had the support of the churches, it was not the dedicated, organized support that was evident in the district leaders' campaign, and that was needed in an uphill race. For instance, the campaign fund for Delany sponsored by the Amsterdam listed contributions from only four churches--St. Mark's, Holy Trinity, Mother Zion and Mt. Olivet. The 1929 election sounded another warning to Republicans who expected continued Negro loyalty, when Democratic mayor, Jimmy Walker, carried black Harlem against Fiorello LaGuardia. The black Democratic organization, the United Colored Democracy, had always turned out a substantial vote in local elections, and the wavering of the ideological adherence to the Republicans increased this strength.[37]

Although the spirit of the decade was optimistic, the political gains since World War I were limited considering the great increase in the black population of New York City during these years. The trend away from the Republican Party indicated a growing concern over this political ineffectiveness. Part of the blame for this ineffectiveness must lie within the black community itself and with its leaders. The particular group of leaders examined here affords some understanding of this problem. Leading black ministers, it would seem, engaged in practical politics to a much larger extent than their white counterparts, yet they, themselves, and their community seemed to impose limits on the extent of their activity. Ministers were somehow betraying the trust of their calling if they forsook "the high moral ground of contending for the pure against the impure," and engaged in the everyday political activities of compromise, patronage and fund-raising. The most active black minister-politician, Alexander Walters, noted this distinction in his essay, "Should the Ministry Take an Active Part in Politics?" Walters answered that ministers should do this, but only on the highest level as "a creator of thought, a moulder of sentiment." A minister, he concluded, should not work in the everyday political tangle of ward politics.[38]

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[37] Colored Citizens Non-Partisan Committee for the Reelection of Mayor James J. Walker, New York City and the Colored Citizen: New York City is the Finest Spot in America for the Negro (New York, 1929); Osofsky, 172-174; Age, March 30, 1929, October 5, 1929, November 9, 1929; Amsterdam, September 25, 1929, November 6, 1929.

It was this hesitancy to engage fully in the political process that limited the effectiveness of the ministers. Only in the campaign to elect district leaders in 1929 did the churches throw the full weight of their organizations into the campaign--collecting money, making speeches, opening buildings to campaign rallies, organizing registration and voter education drives. The result was an overwhelming victory for "the pure against the impure."

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[38] Age, June 6, 1906, November 11, 1907, December 17, 1916.

On other occasions the pastors were willing to speak out occasionally, or sign statements in favor of this or that candidate, or even run for an office themselves, but never did they bring the full power of their church organizations into a united drive behind a campaign. In an article in the Amsterdam, in 1926, Edgar M. Grey made the point that ministers were always ready to assume a symbolic political position such as that of delegate to a national convention but drew back from the hard active engagement in practical politics necessary to win elections. Especially, he said, they fell short of their duty to advise and educate the immature black voter on the simple mechanics of registration and ballot marking. He found that in the campaign of 1926 only two churches made special announcements that black men were running for political office, only one church contributed funds to the campaign and only one church attempted any kind of voter education. In a community composed of a large number of illiterate, newly arrived migrants who had never voted before, the church was one of the chief sources of education and information. In Grey's opinion, the community stood to emerge the loser whenever the church abdicated this responsibility.[39]

All told, the work of Harlem's ministers in the 1920's is difficult to evaluate. On the one hand, much of the pastors' time was spent improving facilities so that their churches could meet the growth in Harlem's population. In doing so churches ran up large debts which put them in a poor position to meet the Depression. The ministers reflected the expansive, optimistic spirit that characterized both urban America and black America in the 1920's. The optimism supported a faith that, through the traditional political and economic systems of America, the black man would some day achieve, equally with the white, the American dream. Although it is easy today to criticize the ministers for their shortsightedness and lack of insight into the tenuous position of blacks in America in the 1920's, this criticism ignores the fact that few leaders of the 1920's, black or white, had such farsightedness or insight. It also ignores the fact that the Depression of the 1930's cut short the work that was only begun in Harlem after 1910. Indeed, part of any explanation of the failure to create much in the way of a viable community in Harlem is to be found in the fact that there was never enough time, that the growth was too rapid and the prosperous years too few to allow consolidation of the necessary institutions of the community.

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[39] Amsterdam, November 24, 1926

By the 1920's,the church was a less important part of the black community than it had been in earlier times, as some of its functions were being assumed by secular institutions. Part of this was a natural effect of technological change and urbanization, but some of it was due to the fact that many black ministers did not adequately keep in touch with the times. Unlike earlier periods, the leading contemporary observers of Harlem life in the 1920's failed to note the church as an important factor in Harlem life. To judge from the accounts of such men as Langston Hughes, Claude McKay and James Weldon Johnson, the churches and the ministers of Harlem meant little, save as a target for occasional satire. Even sociologist Alain Locke's 1925 survey of Harlem, which exuded well-meaning hope for the future and attempted to study all phases of Harlem life, hardly mentioned the church's role in the community. It may be that these observers were blinded by their own optimism and their own vision of the kind of community they wanted Harlem to become, but, still, they reflected the failure of the leading ministers to attract their attention. In sum, the established churches had lost some of their earlier vitality, some of their dynamism. Leading ministers seemed more ready to accommodate than to protest in the 1920's, and this stance cost them their leadership potential with young people and with intellectuals. The established church had failed to create a solid institutional base for community service and had failed to integrate into its membership large numbers of newcomers to the Harlem community. Thus, the leading ministers were partially to blame for the weakness of the Harlem community in the 1920's. Looking back on the 1920's a decade and one-half later, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., said:

> The Negro of Harlem was unprepared for the crash of 1929. Except for a few nationalistic societies there was no mass organization of any importance. Harlem Negroes were unprepared for collective action....Harlem was tinsel. It was a community of people making believe at the game of life.[40]

The crash and the Depression that shook Harlem to its core brought forth new ways of thinking and acting. Harlem's ministers were to become leading figures in the new departures of the 1930's, when just as in the 1920's, they assumed an ideological position in keeping with the temper of the times.

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[40] Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Marching Blacks: An Interpretive History of the Rise of the Black Common Man (New York, 1945), 73.

CHAPTER VI

AN ERA OF MILITANCY: THE NEW LEADING CLERGYMEN AND THE NEW CHURCHES, 1930-1940

The Great Depression brought an end to the spirit of optimism that pervaded Harlem in the 1920's. The mood of the 1930's demonstrated much less confidence in the future. Rather than concentrating on the long term middle-class goals of mobility and opportunity, leaders of the 1930's were more concerned with the immediate needs of food and jobs and were willing to take direct action to press for the fulfillment of these needs. The work of Harlem's leading ministers in the 1930's reflected this change of attitude, for they were in the forefront of the new thinking and new action.

The leadership of most of Harlem's established churches in this decade passed into the hands of new men, for the most part twentieth-century born, urban bred and well educated. The decade saw the retirement of Hutchens Bishop who had headed St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church since 1886, George Sims who had led Union Baptist since 1898 and A. Clayton Powell who had come to Abyssinian Baptist in 1908. In addition, William P. Hayes, Mt. Olivet Baptist's pastor since 1911, left for another church; James W. Brown, who had been at Mother Zion since 1913, was elevated to an A.M.E.Z. bishopric; and John W. Johnson, rector of St. Cyprian's Protestant Episcopal Mission since 1905, and William W. Brown, pastor of

Metropolitan Baptist since 1914, both died. At the end of the decade, of the ministers of Harlem's leading churches, only three had begun their pastorates before 1930, and the longest tenure was that of William Lloyd Imes who had come to St. James Presbyterian in 1925. This turnover in power was one reason why the leading ministers presented a somewhat different attitude in the 1930's.

This discontinuity with the past was partially compensated for by the fact that a significant number of the new pastors of the 1930's were the sons of former pastors. Hutchens Bishop was succeeded by his son, Shelton; A. Clayton Powell by Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.; George Sims by George, Jr.; William W. Brown by his son, W. Abner; and John W. Johnson's son, John Howard, became pastor of St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal Church. The fact that the succession of sons to their father's pulpits did occur with such frequency indicates the strength that these leading ministers could bring to bear in their own churches. The fact that it occurred so often during the 1930's indicated that the pressure of the changed circumstances accompanying the Depression hastened the retirement of a number of men who found their older ideas not entirely relevant to the newer situation. And the number of these minister's sons who assumed power in the 1930's further amplifies that point that the leading ministers of this decade were much more likely to be raised in an urban and middle-class environment and well educated--better prepared for meeting the challenges of an urban church.

Another factor accounting for the changed attitude of the leading ministers was the slowdown in the rate of population growth in Harlem, probably accounted for by a decrease in the rate of migration from rural areas. Negro population in Manhattan increased from 224,670 in 1930 to 298,365 in 1940, an increase of 63,695 or 28 per cent.[1] This slowdown, combined with the extreme economic difficulties of the 1930's, forced church building and capital improvements to be held to an absolute minimum. Although many of the established churches showed a growth that equalled or surpassed that of the general increase in population, the ministers of the 1930's made do with existing facilities. This meant that the ministers could concentrate their time and energy on other matters. Furthermore, although storefronts continued to be formed with some frequency, there were only two new established churches begun in the 1930's--Christ Community, formed from the split congregation of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal in 1931, and Church of the Master Presbyterian, formed in 1938.

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[1] United States Census Office, Fifteenth Census, 1930: Population, II, 70; United States Census Office, Sixteenth Census, 1940: Population (Washington, 1943), II, 137.

Neither of these new churches purchased or built buildings; Christ Community rented a hall for its services and Church of the Master took over the premises of a white congregation and was supported by the New York Presbytery. In fact, only one church built new quarters in the decade, St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal, and that because a fire destroyed the old edifice.[2]

The table below lists the sizes of leading churches in 1929 and 1938 and shows the percentage increase or decrease between 1929 and 1938.[3]

Church	Membership 1929	1938	Per cent Increase/ (Decrease) since 1929
Abyssinian Baptist	8,000	14,978	87%
Mt. Olivet Baptist	1,600	8,000	500
Metropolitan Baptist	4,021	6,195	54
Bethel A.M.E.	2,000	4,000	100
St. Mark's Methodist	2,075	3,400	64
Mother A.M.E.Z.	3,500	3,320	(6)
St. Philip's Episcopal	2,864	2,295	(20)
Emmanuel A.M.E.	1,100	2,000	82
St. Martin's Episcopal	600	2,000	333
Union Baptist	2,000	1,923	(4)
Salem Methodist	1,800	1,800	-
St. James Presbyterian	1,505	1,766	17
Williams C.M.E.	500	1,500	300
			68%

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[2] St. Martin's, also new to this study, was formed in 1928. It will be discussed below. John Howard Johnson, *A Place of Adventure: Essays and Sermons* (Greenwich, Conn., 1955), 18-28; James H. Robinson, *Road Without Turning: The Story of Reverend James H. Robinson: An Autobiography* (New York, 1950), 220-240; *Age*, April 4, 1931, April 11, 1931, April 25, 1931.

[3] Greater New York Federation of Churches, *Negro Churches in Manhattan*, 11-18; Brown, "Negro Religious Worship in New York City from 1625 to 1947," appendix. It should be emphasized that these comparisons are based on the work of two different surveys which might cause some variation.

The leadership of the younger and more militant group of ministers that came to power during the 1930's fell to William Lloyd Imes of St. James, John Howard Johnson of St. Martin's and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., of Abyssinian. The oldest of the group, Imes, had been the pastor of St. James since 1925 and had firmly established himself as a progressive minister who used liberal theological and political ideas to work for an improvement in the everyday lives of Harlem's residents. In the changed environment of the 1930's, William Imes built on the firm foundation of his work in the 1920's and became one of the leaders of black New York's much more militant struggle for dignity. In his book, Marching Blacks, recalling the activities of the 1930's, Adam Powell, Jr., remarked on the contributions Reverend Imes made to the movement for jobs and equal treatment led by the ministers in the 1930's:

> I was young and he was mature. I was radical and so was he, but his radicalism was tempered with thoughtfulness. I was impetuous and impatient; likewise Imes, but he paused to reason. A great man, one of the greatest of the great, with the mind of a scholar, the soul of a saint, the heart of a brother, the tongue of a prophet, the hand of a militant--may his tribe increase.

Imes took an important part in the movement which bargained with the Uptown Chamber of Commerce early in the 1930's, picketed the One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street stores in 1934, threatened mass action against Consolidated

Edison and New York Telephone companies in 1938 and boycotted the New York City buses in 1941, all for increased jobs for black workers. He kept pressure on city, state and federal relief programs for equal treatment of and more jobs for blacks and was one of those who joined A. Philip Randolph in calling for a march on Washington in 1941 to protest against segregation in the armed forces and for more jobs in the defense industries. His support of the struggling labor unions that represented black men continued unabated.[4]

Increasingly during the 1930's, Reverend Imes's message became strongly critical of capitalism. He argued that something was very wrong with a system that had enslaved the black man and the workingman, caused a continual round of wars and now had brought the nation to a state of economic collapse. In 1936, he said:

> Everywhere today we are beset with these false leaders in America and in the world. They use our pulpits, our radio stations, our Senate halls, our newspapers and everything else they can control to try to sway our multitudes into mob action, into cheap and easy ideas of success, or of pseudo-patriotism, or of that brand of Americanism which means the continued privilege for the few at the expense of the many. And when any of us of the common people, white or black, rebel against their demagogy, we are called "dangerous" and "radicals" and all the rest of the bogey names that can be conjured up.

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[4] Powell, Marching Blacks, 96; Age, January 17, 1931, November 21, 1931, June 23, 1934, October 26, 1935, March 23, 1940, October 26, 1940, May 19, 1941; Amsterdam, November 18, 1931, January 26, 1935, August 13, 1938, April 8, 1939, April 29, 1939, October 19, 1940, March 22, 1941.

Closely linked to the more militant stance against economic and racial oppression was his uncompromising opposition to the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy. The invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 brought an unprecedented outcry of protest in black Harlem, and Imes was in the forefront of this protest. "It is your turn today," he told visiting Ethiopians raising money for the defense effort. "It may be mine and my people's tommorrow." "Mark me," Imes advised a mass meeting in behalf of Ethiopia, "if Fascism enters this hemisphere, it will not tarry long before the bourbon South will embrace it." "But come what will," he vowed to another mass meeting, "we will witness against this unholy thing until greed, exploitation and prejudice shall themselves be refugees from a world that has determined to live in brotherhood."[5]

But, though critical of capitalism, he nevertheless remained free of ideological movements that called for overturning the system and remained hopeful of amelioration from within. In a speech given at Fisk College in 1936, he said:

> These masses of the lowly and oppressed in our modern world ought not to have to feel that way, but you and I cannot blame them, if we ourselves are not adventurous and imaginative enough to champion their causes. It is upon their

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[5] William Lloyd Imes, "Lincoln," The Black Pastures, 72; Amsterdam, July 13, 1935, September 28, 1935, April 18, 1936, May 9, 1936, November 14, 1936, November 28, 1936, December 5, 1936, June 5, 1937.

> physical toil that a very considerable part of our prosperity must be built, if at all. And, as a return for that we, too, should with mind and heart ever be toiling with and for them.
>
> They should instinctively feel that we have their interests at heart, and that until cotton farmer and miner, porter and domestic can realize with us the oneness of our cause, and that life is made more tolerable for them as it becomes also better for us, not any of us are really happy or safe. Can we not begin now and see what unfinished tasks are around us right in our own communities?

To Imes, the force needed to right the wrongs of America and the world could be found in Christianity. This was the message of his religious teachings. In a sermon in 1933, he told his congregation:

> Here is the test for Christlikeness today. Can we stoop to humanity's needs and sorrows? Can we be unwilling to know that our brethren in the Southland suffer tenfold more from the disaster of unemployment and poverty and race-hatred than we, and be content without raising voice, heart, means and all our very selves against this wrong? Has religion anything to say about this, and a hundred other kinds of wrong which cry out to high heaven for their very shame? Are there children in your neighborhood who have no opportunity for wholesome play, for safety from physical and moral dangers, from indecent and dangerous housing, and would you dare not do the least thing about it? If you have the mind of Christ, you will try. It is vain to say that we follow Christ and then deny by our lives the very first principles which he laid down, the things of kinship with all humanity, lifting their lives into the fellowship of God.[6]

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[6] William Lloyd Imes, "The New Armageddon," *The Black Pastures*, 77-78; William Lloyd Imes, "A Sermon for Christian Education Day," *ibid*., 51-52.

Reverend John Howard Johnson had served his father as curate of St. Cyprian's on West Sixty-third Street since 1922; in 1928, he was named vicar of the newly established St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal Chapel in Harlem. Just seven when his father was called to St. Cyprian's from Richmond, Virginia, in 1905, Johnson spent the rest of his life in New York City. Brought up in the tough San Juan Hill district, he learned to take care of himself. "I had to fight my way to and from school every day. You had to know how to throw a rock if you wanted to survive." He learned to respect those like his father who had risen above the tawdry ghetto life, but who still remained enough a part of the ghetto to be able to work for its improvement. Johnson attended DeWitt Clinton High School and went from there to Columbia University where he earned B.A. and M.A. degrees and where he was the first Negro to play varsity basketball for Columbia. Johnson never lost his interest in sports and all through his life encouraged black youths to engage in athletics as a way out of the degredation of the ghetto. From Columbia he went to General Theological Seminary where he earned a B.D. degree and then became curate of St. Cyprian's.[7]

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[7] Poston, Post, May 4, 1958; Age, February 11, 1928. One of the trademarks of the legendary boxer, Sugar Ray Robinson, was in radio interviews after his fights to thank his friends and supporters, always ending with "and hello Reverend Johnson," Johnson had provided the young Robinson with his first boxing lessons and his first place to train in the gym at St. Martin's.

St Martin's was established by the Episcopal City Mission Society, which had founded St. Cyprian's. The Society felt the need of an additional church in Harlem to service the growing number of West Indian migrants of the 1920's. In 1928, it purchased the burned out property of the Holy Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church on One Hundred Twenty-second Street. For four years, services of St. Martin's took place in the parish house, the only building left on the property, until the struggling congregation scraped together the funds to rebuild the church. During the 1930's, the church gained membership rapidly so that it claimed 2,000 members by 1938. In 1939, the church burned down again and this time was rebuilt in 18 months. On the occasion of its reopening, St. Martin's became a free and independent parish and Johnson the rector.[8]

Johnson remained in the background while at St. Cyprian's in the 1920's, working under his father's direction and hardly involving himself at all in the black community. In the few sermons reported from his early years at St. Martin's, he voiced a traditional message. "But suffering makes us grow in the comprehension of true values. We can learn that the trivial things of life do not count." "We must remember that it is good to have disappointments." It would seem that Johnson like Imes found himself in the midst of a tremendously changed social situation in the 1930's,and that because of his youth, education and good sense,he was able to adapt his thinking to meet the changed circumstances and become a community leader.[9]

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[8] John Howard Johnson, "A Place of Adventure," A Place of Adventure, 11-28; Ted Yates, "St. Martin's Episcopal Church," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--The Church in New York" (Schomburg Collection); Age, February 11, 1928; Amsterdam, March 2, 1940.

At base, Johnson had a firm faith in the traditional American and Christian ideal, which held that the moral individual who worked hard, shouldered his responsibilities and made the most of his opportunities would be rewarded by his society and his God. In a sermon delivered in 1937, he asserted man's responsibility for his own destiny:

> An effective career is dependent upon a man's being a worker....In the words of Bernard Shaw, "A gentleman is a man who, in one form or another, puts at least as much into life as he takes out of it." This is the law of equivalent service. Society is divided into two classes--those who lift and those who lean. You cannot have a career today unless you are obeying the law of equivalent service and putting in at least as much as you are taking out of life.

"From the example of His life we catch a glimpse of what our own should be," Johnson said in another sermon. "We are not to live haphazardly, without a purpose. We are not to be soft and sleepy, but alert and aware of the responsibility to make the most of the opportunities we have."[10]

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[9] __Age__, June 7, 1930, June 28, 1930.

Far more optimistic than his fellow militants that the problems of the present could be worked out within the bounds of American democracy, capitalism and Christianity, he admired most those men and women who had, in struggling against hardship, refused to be despondent and had realized that "life must get the victory over death. Not automatically, nor immediately,...but in God's own good time. And we must lend a hand." Johnson was proud of his race, proud that in the struggle against adversity in America "the Negro has been neither a drone nor a parasite. He has paid his way." He felt that many critics of Harlem for its crime and poverty had missed the fact that there was "a community of solid struggling church going citizens...working hard, living decently, [who] are the backbone of their race." It was these "humble, gracious, brave, productive, unaffected, uncomplaining, and hardworking citizens" who would provide the foundation for a "great and free America."[11]

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[10] John Howard Johnson, "Carving Out a Career," *Harlem, The War, and Other Addresses* (New York, 1942), 81-82; John Howard Johnson, "On Fulfilling Your Destiny," *ibid.*, 120.

[11] John Howard Johnson, "Eulogies," *ibid.*, 163; John Howard Johnson, "The Truth about Harlem," *ibid.*, 23; John Howard Johnson, "Paul Planted; Apollos Watered; But God Gave the Increase," *ibid.*, 144; John Howard Johnson, "The Wine Ran Short," *ibid.*, 27; John Howard Johnson, "A Place of Adventure," *A Place of Adventure*, 16-17; John Howard Johnson, "Less than the Least," *ibid.*, 117; *Amsterdam*, October 10, 1936.

Johnson first burst into community prominence in 1934 as the chairman of the Citizens' League for Fair Play which led the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" boycott of the One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street stores to secure more jobs for Negroes. Though radical in tactics, Johnson approached this problem as a reformer seeking limited progress, rather than a revolutionary seeking to transfer economic power to the black masses. The Depression had restricted the opportunity of all Americans, but it had most severely restricted the opportunity of the group farthest down. As a result, in the 1930's, blacks were finding it increasingly difficult to achieve the measure of respectability that Johnson felt was so important to life. It was difficult to be "humble, gracious, brave, productive, unaffected, uncomplaining, and hardworking" without a job or even a chance at one. He thus assumed a leading part in the movement to persuade white store owners in Harlem to increase the number of blacks they employed. The persuasion was only vocal at first, but when the white store owners refused to listen to the pleas for dropping their discriminatory hiring policies, Johnson reluctantly agreed to lead a boycott of selected stores.[12]

Johnson's success as the leader of the boycott catapulted him into prominence in Harlem and in the rest of

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[12] John Howard Johnson, "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work," Harlem, 61-68.

New York City as well, as a militant but responsible black leader. As Vere Johns, columnist for the Age, said at the conclusion of the boycott in 1934:

> ...too much praise cannot be given to our leader, the Reverend J. H. Johnson, for his courageous but dignified leadership. It was real genius, and it was he who set the tempo for the whole campaign, a tempo of decency and orderliness that won the respect of the other side and did much to grease the wheels of progress.

From here to the end of the decade, Reverend Johnson did not lack for causes to lead, committees on which to serve or government posts to fill. Reverend Johnson led or worked actively on community groups that brought pressure for fair treatment of blacks by the newly established relief and welfare programs, for better public schools for Harlem, for more playground facilities for Harlem and for an increase in the services of the Children's Aid Society for black children.[13]

Johnson had earned the respect of the Harlem community, not with emotional speeches and revolutionary ideas, but with a militancy founded on a belief in his own and his people's dignity and equality and on a faith in the ultimate justice of the American system. It was this combination of factors that prompted the liberal white community to call so often on Reverend Johnson for service. Mayor LaGuardia appointed him to the Emergency Relief Bureau in 1936, only the second Negro to be appointed by Mayor LaGuardia to an important position in the city administration, according to the *Amsterdam*. In 1937, Governor Lehman appointed him to the State Commission to Improve Living Conditions of the Colored Population of the State of New York, a body created after an investigation of the causes of the 1935 riot in Harlem. In 1941, Johnson became the first Negro to be appointed one of the three members of the Advisory Board of Manhattan and the first Negro to be appointed chaplain of the New York City Police Department. He had served on the Service Bureau for Negro Children created by the Children's Aid Society, was a member of the Board of Directors of the Greater New York Fund, served as chairman of the Advisory Commission on Negro Problems of the W.P.A. and was the only American Negro chosen to meet King George and Queen Elizabeth when they visited the New York World's Fair in 1939.[14]

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[13] Age, August 4, 1934, July 17, 1935, December 21, 1935, September 4, 1937; Amsterdam, March 28, 1936, February 19, 1938, May 20, 1939; John Howard Johnson, "Where His Servants Meet," A Place of Adventure, 21; Ted Yates, "St. Martin's Episcopal Church."

Before becoming Harlem's most sought after appointee, Reverend Johnson made a few forays into partisan politics. In the 1936 election, he campaigned for the American Labor Party, urging support for President Roosevelt and Governor

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[14] Poston, *Post*, May 4, 1958; *Age*, March 30, 1935, July 11, 1936, October 23, 1937, December 18, 1937, March 11, 1939; *Amsterdam*, July 11, 1936, May 7, 1938, May 20, 1939, June 10, 1939, May 17, 1941.

Lehman on the Labor Party ticket. In 1937, he served as LaGuardia's campaign chairman for Harlem and ran for a City Council seat supported by the Seabury Non-Partisan Committee and the Fusion Party. Under the newly instituted city-wide proportional representation system, Johnson ran a strong race and was one of the last candidates to be declared defeated in a ballot-counting marathon that lasted almost a month. In all, Johnson seemed to prefer non-partisan community work to partisan politics, for he never dedicated himself fully to any party organization. In a period characterized by fusion politics that put dedication to the community over dedication to party, Johnson fitted in well.[15]

Reverend Johnson eloquently voiced in sermons and speeches and in his actions "the fundamental dignity of the present day Negro and his absolute right to equality." He firmly believed that America would recognize and correct the degraded environment and racial prejudice that caused the inequality of so many blacks. As a product of that environment and of that prejudice, he had overcome its hardships, and, therefore, asked only that the conditions be ameliorated so that more of his race could follow in his footsteps. "Today the Negro is not looking back, he is looking forward. He is not looking down, he is looking up. Uncle Tom and Ole Black Joe, God bless them, are dead. The Negro asks you to accept him, not as a ward, not as a joke, but as a man and an equal."[16]

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[15] Age, September 18, 1937, September 25, 1937, October 16, 1937, October 23, 1937, November 27, 1937; Amsterdam, November 7, 1936, July 23, 1938; Walter Ryan Colahan, "The Negro in the American Labor Party," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--Political Life and Organization of Negroes in New York City" (Schomburg Collection).

Harlem's best-known minister, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., rose to prominence as the most militant of the new breed of pastors who dominated the religious scene in Harlem in the 1930's. Born in New Haven in 1908, Powell became a New York City resident at six months of age when his father was called to serve Abyssinian. Nurtured in a comfortable and happy home, urged to excellence by his proud and highly respected father and perhaps spoiled by his independently wealthy mother and the adoring Abyssinian congregation, young Powell grew up a combination of self-indulgent playboy and militant champion of the black masses.[17] The fact that he was able to pass for white, while, at the same time, he was very conscious of his racial heritage, compounded the split in Powell's personality. As he told his biographers:

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[16] John Howard Johnson, "Green Pastures," A Place of Adventure, 44; John Howard Johnson, manuscript of speech given before rally of American Labor Party, October 27, 1936, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--Political Life and Organizations of Negroes in New York City" (Schomburg Collection).

[17] A college friend said of Powell: "He was God both in the church and in his home, to his parents and to the parishioners. Whenever he came in on a holiday, his bed used to be loaded with gifts of all kinds from the parishioners." Quoted in Ross, Spivack and Gelman, Post, March 27, 1956.

> I remember one night my mother sent me out to the bakery, and I was stopped by a bunch of Negro kids and they beat me up because they thought I was white. The next night I went out and a gang of Irish kids beat me up because I was Negro. Later that week another group of Negroes stopped me and they said, "What are you?" I said, "Mixed." Well, they thought I said, "Mick," so they beat me up.

An excellent student at Townsend Harris High School, Powell entered City College of New York at 16, only to flunk out in his freshman year. Encouraged by his mother who secretly gave him large sums of money from her own inheritance, Powell entered Colgate University as a pre-medical student. At Colgate he made a good academic record but was better known as a "killer with the girls," He successfully passed for white until the fraternity that he pledged checked into his family background.[18]

Influenced by the racial pride and Christian idealism that were such important aspects of his father's character, Powell closely identified himself with the struggle of the black masses for dignity. He later described to his biographers the influence on his outlook of a visit, in his youth, from his father's stepfather, an ex-slave, who had once tried to escape and had been branded when captured:

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[18] Lewis, Adam Clayton Powell, 14-40; Ross, Spivack and Gelman, Post, March 27, 1956, March 29, 1956. Powell told the Post reporters that his mother had given him more than $100,000 in cash from the time he went to Colgate until her death in the late 1930's.

> I stood on a chair and traced down his brown back with my finger the "P" of seared human flesh. I swore to my God that I would not rest until I had wiped that brand from my memory and from the conscience of white America.

"That is what I am a product of," Powell said in the introduction to his own interpretation of Negro history, "the sustained indignation of a branded grandfather, the militant protest of my grandmother, the disciplined resentment of my father and mother, and the power of mass action of the church. I am a new Negro--a marching black."[19]

Under the constant urging of his father, Powell finally decided in his junior year at Colgate to become a minister, preaching his first sermon at Abyssinian on Good Friday in 1929. After graduating from Colgate in 1930, he assumed direction of the relief facilities of the Abyssinian Church which had been stepped up because of the increased unemployment in that year. Ordained in the Spring of 1931 and appointed assistant pastor of the Church, his elevation to the head of the largest church in Harlem was considerably eased by his father. A number of the older members of the church including several of the deacons, however, prevailed on the elder Powell to delay his retirement, and young Adam did not take over official control of the church until 1937. There was a good deal of opposition to him even then because of his radical political and labor activities and because of his open flaunting of the fundamentalist moral code in his private life. Powell's marriage to Isabel Washington, a showgirl and divorcee, in 1933, was the source of much criticism, only partially quelled when she gave up her stage career to work for the church. "This is a victory not for me but for the forces of liberalism within the church," Powell told the Abyssinian congregation upon his election as head pastor in 1937. "For the future, I promise to preserve at all cost my individual integrity and to champion liberation in the church."[20]

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[19] Powell, Marching Blacks, 18; Ross, Spivack and Gleman, Post, March 27, 1956.

In the great oratorical tradition of black ministers, Adam Powell, Jr., was always an outstanding preacher--"a bravura performer, a master of the full range of the oratorical device." But the lessons he preached were quite distinct from the many great orators that had preceded him. He did not dwell on the necessity of hard work, responsible behavior and Christian forgiveness, nor did he look to the stories and language of the Bible for familiar reinforcement of themes. Instead, the young Powell used the familiar language and examples of the street to reinforce the lessons he felt important--the necessity of the black masses to assert their power and their dignity and demand their proper due as human beings and as Christians. Instead of imploring individuals to succeed, he implored the mass to see their interests together as a group and to use this new insight to gain success and uplift for all together. For Adam Powell, Jr., the church was not an institution existing to insure the spiritual salvation of its members alone, but was an instrument to be used for the total salvation--spiritual and material--of all mankind. "My father said he built the church but I would interpret it," Powell said in the 1950's in looking back at his work. "I intended to fashion that church into a mighty weapon, keen edged, and sharp pointed. I intended to move the people out of the church to where God was--along the avenues and up the byways where hundreds of thousands were languishing in hopeless squalor." In his installation sermon, he called on the members of Abyssinian Church to rededicate the church to greatness along the lines of "to each according to his need and from each according to his talent.... We must not only save the individual, but also society."[21]

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[20] Sydney French, "Biographical Sketch of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--Biographical Sketches" (Schomburg Collection); Hickey and Edwin, 39, 49; Powell, *Against the Tide*, 283; Ross, Spivack and Gelman, *Post*, March 27, 1956, March 28, 1956; *Age*, April 25, 1931, January 28, 1933, May 25, 1935, October 2, 1937, October 23, 1937; *Amsterdam*, March 27, 1929, October 9, 1929, January 18, 1933, March 15, 1933, September 25, 1937.

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[21] Ross, Spivack and Gelman, Post, March 28, 1956; Adam

Powell was critical of fellow ministers who interpreted their roles more narrowly. He felt that the "petty, narrow, reactionary, hypocritical, and spineless leadership" was responsible for what he called in the 1930's "the revolt of the pew" against the "leadership of the pulpit." "Wherever I have gone, I have found the Negro masses years ahead of the ministry."

> Harlem has sixty-eight churches, excluding the fly-by-nighters. You can count on your fingers all of them that are worth keeping open. They preach about "golden streets to come" and fail to support community action to clean up those here. They mouth about "mansions in the sky" and are not conscious of the overcrowding here. They prate of a "land of milk and honey" with their own members starving, due to capitalistic oppression. They rave about "security to come" and fail now to fight child labor or point the way to trade unionism.

Powell wrote a weekly column for the Amsterdam called "Soapbox." The column, which ran from 1936 through 1939, served as a kind of pulpit that reached the entire Harlem community and substantially increased the size of his "congregation." Powell was the only leading minister to regularly reach a mass audience wider than his own congregation in this way. This served as an obvious base for his later political popularity, but it also coincided with his thinking that the church had to expand beyond the narrow confines of its own walls to be a factor in the life of

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Clayton Powell, Jr., quoted in Arna W. Bontemps, One Hundred Years of Negro Freedom (New York, 1961), 254; Amsterdam, November 27, 1937.

the community.[22]

The central thrust of Adam Powell's ideas in the 1930's called on the black masses to unite in recognition of their common lot and use all the power inherent in that unification to achieve objectives necessary for a decent standard of living--jobs, food, housing, equal treatment. Powell decried the old leadership that divided the race into rival groups and that counselled against direct assault on the system that perpetuated the degraded status of the vast majority of black Americans. "Away with those who feel they are better. Away with a caste system within this race of ours....The Negro in the valley is hungry, despised, humiliated, oppressed and he's ready to march."[23]

Although at times Powell employed the rhetoric of black nationalism, he much more often advocated the linking of the black masses with the white working classes. "Let's stop trucking nationalistically and start streamlining interracially, for our only salvation is the world brotherhood of all the oppressed--and that is the majority." Powell flirted with the Communist Party all through the 1930's calling for a "synthesis of Marxism and Christianity." "I don't mind being called a Communist," he said.

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[22] Amsterdam, April 4, 1936, September 5, 1936.

[23] Ibid., July 4, 1936, August 8, 1936, October 24, 1936, February 20, 1937, July 17, 1937, January 16, 1938, May 6, 1939.

"The day will come when being called a Communist will be the highest honor that can be paid to any individual--and that day is coming soon." The junior Powell vigorously supported the growing trade union movement and kept pressure on union leaders for an integrated labor movement. "The only salvation is active, planned co-operation between all workers," he counselled. "Trade unionism is the only way out for black and white workers." His political and economic philosophy was no doubt strongly influenced by the Marxist ideology so popular especially among people of his generation in the 1930's. He was a leading member of a number of organizations, including the Scottsboro Defense Committee, the American League against War and Fascism, the National Negro Congress and the American Labor Party, whose membership included a good number of Communist Party members.[24]

Powell first gained attention in the winter of 1930-1931 when he headed Abyssinian's relief project, which was the most extensive in Harlem, and, in 1932, when he joined Sherwood Anderson, Franz Boas, Malcom Cowley, Countee Cullen, John DosPassos, Waldo Frank, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay and Edna St. Vincent Millay on the

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[24] Age, June 3, 1933; Amsterdam, September 1, 1934, March 9, 1935, March 14, 1936, August 29, 1936, October 3, 1936, January 2, 1937, September 18, 1937, January 21, 1939; Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, The American Communist Party: A Critical History (New York, 1962), 214, 348-357, 420.

Scottsboro Unity Defense Committee to solicit support for the legal defense of the Scottsboro boys. But he became widely known in Harlem in 1933, when he challenged some of the Negro establishment in calling for an investigation of racial discrimination at Harlem Hospital and in finally leading a march on City Hall to demonstrate for that cause.[25]

Powell participated actively in the 1934 boycott of the One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street stores, although he deferred to the leadership of Reverend Johnson. He organized the Consolidated Tenants League in 1936 to protest rent increases and slum conditions, helped organize editorial workers of the Amsterdam, drug store workers and shoe store workers into unions. In 1938, he and William Imes formed the Greater New York Coordinating Committee for Employment to press for more Negro employment. The Coordinating Committee threatened boycotts of Consolidated Edison and New York Telephone in 1938 and did boycott the Fifth Avenue Coach Lines and the Omnibus Corporation in 1941.[26]

Though Powell's attempts at organizing the masses were not spectacularly successful, viewed in the light of what had gone before, they were important. In the first place, some progress was made. By the end of the decade, as a result of the boycotts and mass pressure, more blacks were working for Consolidated Edison, New York Telephone, Harlem Hospital, the One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street stores, Omnibus Corporation, Fifth Avenue Coach Lines and Liggett Drug Stores than ever before, and blacks were working in jobs previously closed to them entirely. Furthermore, the use of the mass pressure techniques illustrated that gains could be made not by waiting on the good will of the white man but by demanding that justice be done. Powell did not limit his protests to conditions leading to economic discontent; wherever there was discrimination, he was quick to point it out from the pulpit and from his newspaper column and quick to demand its end with a threat of mass reaction. Though the threats seldom were carried through, the point was usually made, both in the mind of the discriminator and those discriminated against. Powell, for instance, called on Negroes to stop reading _The New York Mirror_, _The New York Journal_, _Cosmopolitan_ and _Good Housekeeping_ and to stop listening to radio station WINS in protest against the anti-Negro bias of William Randolph Hearst. He advocated a boycott of Standard Brands products because their exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair had a separate colored restroom. He refused to participate in the annual fund-raising drive for Infantile Paralysis because of the discrimination practiced against Negro children at the Warm Springs, Georgia, center. He made public the discriminatory treatment accorded blacks in the W.P.A. activities and at the World's Fair.[27]

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[25] Powell, Against the Tide, 220-232; Age, October 8, 1932, January 14, 1933, March 11, 1933, April 29, 1933; Amsterdam, January 25, 1933, February 15, 1933, April 26, 1933, June 7, 1933.

[26] Age, June 2, 1934, June 23, 1934, October 19, 1935, November 23, 1935, April 5, 1941, April 26, 1941; Amsterdam, April 27, 1935, March 7, 1936, October 17, 1936, November 21, 1936, June 26, 1937, April 2, 1938, March 22, 1941.

Increasingly, Powell became active in politics, choosing to work through the newly founded American Labor Party. Never friendly to conservative Republicans and seemingly always at odds with LaGuardia and the fusionists, he worked with the Democrats through the 1936 election, but was always critical of the discrimination inherent in many New Deal programs. He obviously could never remain happy in a party whose leader chose for his first Supreme Court nominee a man that Powell considered an "anti-Negro, Alabama cracker, pro-Klansman, phoney liberal." Clearly, in terms of his ideology, the American Labor Party was the kind of political party that comported with Powell's hope for a unified working-class movement. He had to move cautiously in American Labor Party circles, for many of the union leaders controlling the party were not very anxious to open up their ranks and their precious jobs to an influx of blacks hungry for work. Usually not one to back away from a fight, Powell, nevertheless, said relatively little about union discrimination during th 1930's. In 1940, he was appointed to the Executive Board of the American Labor Party, and, in 1941, he was one of the party's nominees for City

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[27] _Age_, September 21, 1940; _Amsterdam_, June 20, 1936, February 13, 1937, December 3, 1938, April 1, 1939, May 27, 1939.

Council. By that time his exploits had made his name a household word in Harlem, and, as one observer put it, "may be described as a kind of unofficial mayor in the community of Harlem."[28]

Adam Powell, Jr., sensed that the Negro masses hungered for leadership and he felt that he could assume that leadership and direct the masses toward significant and socially useful goals. Like any leader, he sometimes had difficulty balancing his very real and honest concern for the interest of the masses and his equally real and honest concern for his own self-advancement. Perhaps, it was the magnitude and the nobility of the cause and of his concern that brought the personal excesses that caused many to condemn his whole effort. His own flair for publicity and his willingness to shatter convention contributed greatly to his popularity but, at the same time, provided a weakness that always threatened his downfall.

Less important as a community leader than Powell, Imes or Johnson, but representative as well of the younger generation of ministers was Shelton Hale Bishop, son of Hutchens Bishop, who inherited the pastorate of St. Philip's in 1933. Born in New York City in 1889, Shelton Bishop was reared comfortably and educated well. He graduated from

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[28] Sydney French, "Biographical Sketch of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr."; Age, October 24, 1936, August 3, 1940, July 26, 1941; Amsterdam, June 6, 1936, August 28, 1937, November 6, 1937, November 13, 1937, June 18, 1938.

Columbia University and from General Theological Seminary and served Episcopal churches in Chicago and Pittsburgh before he came to St. Philip's as curate in 1923. Intellectually, he was well prepared for the leadership of a Northern urban church, but he was not as well prepared to relate to the new migrants coming from rural Southern or West Indian environments. Shelton Bishop never developed the large popular following achieved by other ministers with similar progressive social and political ideas. St. Philip's, in fact, lost membership during the 1930's, retaining its image as one of Harlem's most elite churches but gradually losing its power as a leading force in the community.[29]

The circumstances of Shelton Bishop's appointment as curate of St. Philip's in 1923 weakened his popularity from the beginning. To make room for his son, Hutchens Bishop had to secure the transfer of Reverend Everard W. Daniel, the curate for 17 years. Daniel, who had been active in attracting West Indian immigrants into membership at St. Philip's, had a large following who protested his release and finally left the church over the issue. The elder Bishop had been under criticism for some time because of the high salary he commanded, because of his liberal moral and theological views and because it was known that two of his children were "passing." Later in the 1920's, Shelton Bishop and his wife, the daughter of A.M.E. bishop and Chicago politician A. J. Carey, separated, and a three-year legal and personal battle ensued which finally led to divorce in 1932. The divorce did little to make popular the elevation of the younger Bishop to rector upon his father's retirement in 1933.[30]

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[29] Brown, "Negro Religious Worship in New York City from 1625 to 1947," appendix; The New York Times, August 25, 1962.

Shelton Bishop was confronted with a desperate financial situation when he assumed the leadership of St. Philip's in 1933. Due apparently to the inability of many of the tenants to pay rent, the income on the church's apartment houses had fallen below the expenses of running them and repaying the mortgage. Bishop was forced to lease all of the apartment houses to a real estate firm which meant that the huge independent income of the church completely disappeared, and the rector had to cut operating expenses from $73,000 to $12,000 a year. St. Philip's, which at the beginning of the Depression had been a major force in supplying relief to jobless Harlemites, had to eliminate this work almost entirely after 1933. This was no doubt a blow to the young rector who, while curate, had helped administer the emergency relief and employment programs of the city and had headed the Harlem Co-operating Committee on Relief and Employment formed in November of 1930 to coordinate the work of the Urban League, the churches and the wide variety of charitable organizations working in Harlem.[31]

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[30] Age, April 9, 1921, June 25, 1921, July 16, 1921, August 13, 1921, September 17, 1921, October 8, 1921, January 17, 1931, November 5, 1932, April 2, 1932, July 2, 1932, November 19, 1932, March 4, 1933; Amsterdam, March 6, 1929. The Age gave fullest coverage to phases of the divorce case in which Shelton Bishop was charged with cruelty and Hutchens Bishop with physically assaulting his daughter-in-law. The paper had been unfriendly to the Bishops since 1921 when the elder Bishop had refused to support Fred Moore's campaign to oust the secretary of the Harlem Y.M.C.A. on the grounds of "indiscreet association with his private secretary." Age, February 26, 1921.

Despite his leadership of an elite church and his bourgeois upbringing, Bishop always displayed a more than passing interest in radical politics. He did not participate in any of the movements of the 1920's for more black representation in Harlem and never worked actively for either major political party, but he did at various times endorse Socialists for office. In 1932, he told his congregation that he failed to see "how any Christian who is true to his Godly ideas could fail to vote the Socialist ticket on November 8." He was more active than most in his support of labor unions, and helped to organize the first Negro Labor Conference in New York in 1927. He expressed his views on labor organization in 1935:

> I believe fundamentally in the cause of the workers whenever they come into conflict with employers. I stand unequivocally for their right to

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[31] Age, January 24, 1931, October 17, 1931, March 4, 1933, December 23, 1933; Amsterdam, November 12, 1930, October 21, 1931; The New York Times, August 25, 1962; The Dunbar News, June 18, 1930; Shelton Bishop, reprinted sermon delivered October 7, 1956, in Shelton Bishop Pamphlet File (Schomburg Collection).

> organize and to use the recognized corporate weapon of the strike. I acknowledge picketing as the lawful means of bringing before the public the cause of the workers in a specific conflict.

Reverend Bishop was a member of the earliest New York committees to raise funds for the defense of the Scottsboro boys. But his favorite cause, the subject of many sermons and articles, was Christian pacifism. It was his belief that the most important contribution black Christians brought the world was their peaceful, forgiving, gentle approach to the solution of problems. He saw this as the key to future progress in race relations and hoped that the same approach could be found to solving world problems. A churchman all his life, Reverend Bishop dedicated himself after 1933 to preaching pacifism and to rebuilding St. Philip's Church. Looking back on his work upon his retirement in 1956, he was proudest of the fact that in the midst of the Depression the once fashionable church "maintained its dignity" and became a parish supported by its people, not by its property.[32]

Another example of the new ideological position of many of Harlem's ministers is provided by the less well-known David Nathaniel Licorish. Licorish was born in Barbados in 1904, one of eight children of a Baptist evangelist and bible teacher. He came to the United States after attending elementary and secondary school in Barbados and the Canal Zone. In the United States he graduated from the National Bible Institute and was licensed to preach by William W. Brown of Metropolitan Baptist. Soon after this, in 1925, he was called to head St. Matthew's Baptist Church, a storefront. He held this position until 1938. During much of this time he remained also an assistant pastor at Metropolitan.[33]

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[32] *Age*, December 10, 1927, October 8, 1932, November 23, 1935, October 23, 1937; *Amsterdam*, October 26, 1932; *The New York Times*, August 25, 1962; Shelton H. Bishop, "Peacemaking in the Midst of Cold Wars," in Sydney Temple, ed., *Peace is Possible* (Deep River, Conn., 1949), 99; Shelton H. Bishop, "The Romance of the Negro," *The Spirit of Missions*, LXXV (March, 1910), 205; Shelton H. Bishop, *The Wonder of Prayer* (Greenwich, Conn., 1959), *passim*.

The central theme put forth in Reverend Licorish's sermons and essays and through his work with such groups as the War Resister's League, the National Negro Congress, the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the American League for Peace and Democracy was the necessity of reorienting Christianity toward "champion/ing/ the cause of the oppressed," so that "through mass pressure, social justice and racial equality may be obtained," and so as to achieve a lasting world peace. The church, he said, "has sat idly by and permitted ruthless exploitation of the masses to go right on within the pews and before its altars, while its organs are pealing forth songs of peace and joy to all men." For this reason he felt the church was doomed to crumble as capitalism was crumbling unless it rededicated itself to become again "a militant institution championing the cause of the forgotten man." With such a point of view, Licorish was a willing participant not only in the anti-war movement but in the attempts of the 1930's to stimulate black unity and to organize a strong labor movement. He resigned from the pastorate of St. Matthew's in 1938 to devote full time to lecturing on behalf of the "bewildered masses." He worked for a time as a counsellor for the New York Board of Education before becoming assistant pastor of Abyssinian Baptist, a post he still holds today.[34]

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[33] Age, January 22, 1938; David N. Licorish, Tomorrow's Church In Today's World; A Study of the Twentieth Century Challenge to Religion (New York, 1956), dust jacket.

Not all of Harlem's new leading clergymen dedicated themselves to the new militancy and radicalism that characterized so much of the life of the 1930's. Several of the newer pastors espoused more traditional points of view, modified to be sure by the changed social environment to which they had to relate. Lorenzo H. King followed the deposed James H. Robinson to the troubled pulpit of St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal Church in 1931 and achieved a good deal of success through the familiar channels. He put the church on a sound financial basis, worked for social betterment through the Urban League, the N.A.A.C.P. and the Y.M.C.A., ran for Congress on the Republican ticket and became a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. King was not a young man when he came to New York, and his biography resembled the older generation of New York ministers. Born in Mississippi, in 1878, of parents who had been slaves, his father died when he was only one year old, and he worked his way through Clark College in Atlanta and Gammon Theological Seminary. For a time he taught English at Clark and later became pastor of Central Methodist Church in Atlanta. Taking over St. Mark's when the church was "on the verge of receivership," he dedicated himself first to strengthening the shaky financial foundation of the church and to ending the factionalism that had further weakened it. He renegotiated the mortgage, cut down the expenses, initiated an ambitious fund-raising plan and campaigned energetically for new members. By the end of the decade, he could boast of a church nearly double in size and steadily repaying its debt, although the mortgage was still substantial.[35]

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[34] Age, November 23, 1935, May 29, 1937, January 22, 1938; Amsterdam, March 14, 1936, May 2, 1936, January 16, 1937, November 27, 1937; David N. Licorish, Adventures for Today (New York, 1939), 49, 52; Licorish, Tomorrow's Church in Today's World, passim.

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[35] Brown, "Negro Religious Worship in New York City from 1625 to 1947," appendix; [ ] Tarry, "St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--The Church in New York"(Schomburg Collection); *Christian Advocate*, November 6, 1947; *Age*, June 23, 1934, June 15, 1935, April 18, 1936, July 13, 1940; *Amsterdam*, May 19, 1934, January 1, 1938, May 25, 1940.

The desperate financial situation of St. Mark's and Reverend King's determination to improve it made it more likely that his point of view would follow less militant patterns. Heavily in debt to white creditors and dependent on sources of funds from the largely white Methodist Episcopal Church, he was not in a position to attack the system as freely as a man in Powell's situation could. This is not to say the St. Mark's insolvency forced Reverend King to change his ideology--indeed, it followed quite naturally from his background--only that the situation added another determining factor towards thinking and acting in the traditional manner. Reverend King always demonstrated an awareness of the social problems of the poor and the black, and he advocated the view that religion "be utilized to make life more livable and not confine itself to emotionalism and other-worldliness." He was a leading participant in a great number of community relief projects. He served as president of the Juvenile Aid Bureau, president of the West Harlem Council of Social Agencies, chairman of the All-Boro Council for Negro Welfare, vice-president of the Harlem unit of the Federal Arts Project, chairman of the Harlem Children's Fresh Air Fund and member of the World's Fair Committee on Public Welfare.[36]

He also worked actively through the established channels of the Urban League and the N.A.A.C.P. He was a member at various times of the Board of Directors and the Advisory Council of the New York Urban League. Speaking of the Urban League in 1940, King declared:

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[36] Age, December 11, 1937; Amsterdam, March 14, 1936, January 1, 1938, May 25, 1940.

> I regard the New York Urban League as the most indispensable social service institution in this community....in service, in vocational guidance, placements in jobs and industrial enterprises, in service affording foster care, service for convalescents, and for children in fresh air camps.

Through the N.A.A.C.P. he supported the protest on behalf of the Scottsboro boys and was one of a delegation of 19 who presented a protest petition to President Roosevelt in 1933. He carefully disavowed, however, any connection with the Communist-supported Labor Defense Committee which also supported the boys.[37]

True to tradition, King emphasized the old values of hard work and self-help as the solution to the immediate economic crisis as well as the long term racial crisis. In a speech to the Pullman Porters in 1931, he lauded the porters for their ability to be servile in the face of arrogance and unreasonableness. In "patience, resourcefulness and service" the "porter is without a peer," and, because of his "demonstrated superiority in this line of work," the Negro would remain dominant in this occupation. He was an early supporter of the movement to obtain more jobs for blacks in Harlem. But he dropped his open support when the movement switched its tactics from sermons to boycotts. He called **for more** black-owned businesses and for the race to support their own businesses. He led a committee in 1938 that hoped to begin a Negro-owned bank for Harlem to replace the recently closed Dunbar National Bank.[38]

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[37] New York Urban League, Annual Report, 1940, 7; Age, January 14, 1933, November 3, 1934; Amsterdam, September 16, 1931, October 21, 1931, May 10, 1933.

Reverend King loyally supported the Republican Party throughout the 1930's and worked on the local level for increased black representation for Harlem. He campaigned for Hoover, Landon and Wilkie and in 1936 labelled President Roosevelt a "Negro-hating, Southern Democrat." He led an unsuccessful movement in 1935 that called for Congressional redistricting in order to give black Harlem a seat in Congress and was mentioned as a likely Republican candidate for the seat. In 1938, he formed the Coalition Congressional Committee to work for the election of a Negro congressman from Harlem and was in September nominated by the Republicans to run for Congress from the Twenty-first District. Although he campaigned extensively and made a direct appeal for a solid black vote, King lost by a large margin. He remained loyal to the Republican Party, however, and in

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[38] Age, June 27, 1931, October 8, 1932, February 10, 1934, May 14, 1938; Amsterdam, May 8, 1937, April 23, 1938, April 30, 1938.

1940 was chosen as a delegate to the National Convention.[39]

Lorenzo King reached the peak of his long career in 1940 when he was named one of the four bishops of the central jurisdiction of the newly unified Methodist Episcopal Church. The unification of the Southern and Northern Methodist churches had been the subject of long debate, especially over the place of the Negro Methodists in the merged body. The compromise solution was to organize the church into five territorial conferences and one central jurisdiction solely for Negroes irrespective of geography. King had opposed this plan in 1937 and had at one time considered legal proceedings against the church, but apparently changed his mind in 1940 when it was agreed to accord the central jurisdiction four bishops.[40]

King's achievements were in a sense evidence of the validity of his own philosophy. Born in poverty, a step from slavery, he had worked hard and asked for no special favors, he had held to his Christian idealism and to his belief in the overall justness of the society, and as a reward he had climbed steadily to a position of eminence. His background and his ideas are close to the ministerial pattern of the 1920's and before, but the fact that he achieved the stature that he did in Harlem of the 1930's indicates that such an ideology had not entirely lost its hold on black people. The activities in the 1930's of Reverend Decatur Ward Nichols of the Emmanuel A.M.E. Church, referred to above, but which came in the 1930's as well, further substantiate this generalization. Though younger in years, Nichols' social philosophy was quite similar to King's. And, by 1940, he had risen to a position of prominence in Harlem and in his church.

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[39] Age, November 5, 1932, January 26, 1935, October 24, 1936, March 26, 1938, April 2, 1938, July 30, 1938, September 24, 1938, October 15, 1938, October 22, 1938, November 5, 1938, November 12, 1938, November 19, 1938, January 22, 1940; Amsterdam, February 23, 1935, November 9, 1935, April 23, 1938, April 30, 1938, August 27, 1938, October 1, 1938, October 15, 1938, November 12, 1938, January 20, 1940.

[40] Johnson, Johnson and Palmer, 134-158; Age, February 6, 1937, June 29, 1940; Amsterdam, January 30, 1937, February 19, 1938, May 25, 1940.

The Depression-spawned difficulties of Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in the early 1930's led to the resignation of Reverend William P. Hayes.and a period of problems for his successor. Hayes blamed the congregation for a lack of zeal in attacking the debt and said that his health was being undermined because of the perplexing problem. When he received the call of a debt-free church in Newark in 1932, he resigned. Mt. Olivet was without a permanent pastor for over a year as the congregation wrangled over whether or not to try and attract Hayes back. Finally, O. Clay Maxwell,who had previously served a Baptist church in St. Louis,was called, although a large minority favored Hayes. The problem of a divided and debt-ridden church was to concern Maxwell for the next few years. But, by 1935, he had succeeded in quieting the dissent, and, by 1938, Mt. Olivet was the second largest church in Harlem. In terms of percentage, its gain in membership was the largest for any Harlem church during the 1930's. The debt was not wiped out, but it had been reduced significantly, a development aided in part by a 1937 court decision which relieved the church of part of its burden.[41]

Maxwell, who was born in Memphis in 1886, was an exponent of an evangelical preaching style and a fundamentalist moral code. "The present condition of distress in which the world finds itself today," Maxwell told his congregation in 1933, "is the result of the people forgetting God back in the days of prosperity." On another occasion, in 1937, he admonished his flock for their failure to understand the Bible: "I will tell you one reason why you cannot understand it. It is because you are too contemptibly lazy to study the work of God." "As a result of his fall," Maxwell said in the same sermon, "man becomes a degenerate, full of the germs of evil, a self-corrupter." Maxwell displayed a traditional interest in politics, supporting the Republican Party and movements such as King's for more

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[41] Greater New York Federation of Churches, Negro Churches in Manhattan, 11; Brown, "Negro Religious Worship in New York City from 1625 to 1947," appendix; Age, January 23, 1932, March 19, 1932, May 6, 1933, June 24, 1933, July 8, 1933, June 15, 1935; Amsterdam, July 12, 1933, February 12, 1938.

Negro representation within it. He was a member of the Urban League and the N.A.A.C.P. and occasionally spoke out on themes of racial justice. He seemed remarkably remote, however, from the omnipresent economic and social concerns of the great mass of Harlem residents. He played no important part in the many relief projects or in the continual agitation for jobs. Maxwell's success in attracting a large following, attested to by the size of his church at the end of the decade, would indicate further that this kind of religious leadership was still popular in Harlem of the 1930's.[42]

William W. Brown, who had served Metropolitan Baptist since 1914, died in 1930, and his son, W. Abner, who had assisted him for a number of years, assumed the leadership of the church. Like his father, Abner Brown was a dramatic performer in the pulpit, preaching unadulterated "down home sermons." A reporter for the Age commented on the services:

> The frequent "Amens" and "Ahmens" of the congregation served as a frequent interpolation to the sermon. One woman leaped up and shouted, "Thank you, Jesus." Several fainted out of sheer ecstacy and had to be fanned. One ran up and down the aisles until she was exhausted. Another was striking her head violently against the pew, when ushers grabbed and held her.

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[42] Age, December 9, 1933, October 31, 1936, April 2, 1938, June 28, 1941; Amsterdam, January 2, 1937, February 2, 1938, May 31, 1941; New York Urban League, Annual Report, 1940.

The younger Brown, however, never achieved the distinction and respect that his father had. He had the unfortunate reputation of being a heavy drinker and of paying too much attention to the younger ladies of the congregation. In 1933, the deacons of the church charged him with drunkenness, with borrowing money from female members of the church and with "gross sexual immorality." The church membership voted him innocent, but the Age and the Amsterdam both contended that the favorable vote was because of Reverend Brown's hold on the female members of the church. Said one member to an Age reporter, "I know he drinks some, but his father told me that he had to do it on account his lungs are bad." Brown continued in office and the church gained membership through the decade, though the increase was not spectacular. Well situated financially when the Depression hit, there was no trouble in paying off the mortgage. Brown seemed to take no interest at all in the outside community. He was not active in protest movements, welfare projects and community improvement or even in politics. He was content to preach and practice the oldtime religion, perhaps responding to the difficult circumstances by clinging more steadfastly to the simple and the familiar.[43]

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[43] Age, April 22, 1933, June 17, 1933, July 1, 1933, July 8, 1933, July 15, 1933; Amsterdam, June 14, 1933, June 21, 1933, June 18, 1938.

Harlem gained two other excellent ministers in the late 1930's--Benjamin C. Robeson, brother of the well-known singer and race leader, Paul Robeson, and James H. Robinson. Robeson, who succeeded James W. Brown at Mother Zion in 1936, and Robinson, who in 1938, just out of Union Theological Seminary, assumed the leadership of the newly created Church of the Master Presbyterian, both began too late to make a mark during the 1930's.[44]

In summary, the 1930's had seen a large number of newer and younger men take over Harlem pastorates. Though some of the new ministers of the 1930's played traditional roles and espoused traditional ideas,the most active of the new men spoke for a new and more militant religion and thus effected a change in the overall focus of Harlem's religious life. Harlem's leading ministers in the 1930's were much more likely than their predecessors to work for the immediate fulfillment of the traditional promises of America and Christianity.

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[44] Amsterdam, March 5, 1938; Savage, The Presbyterian Church in New York City, 177; Robinson, Road Without Turning, passim.

CHAPTER VII

AN ERA OF MILITANCY: THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE LEADING CLERGYMEN IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY OF THE 1930's

The Depression dominated religious life in Harlem in the 1930's. The bitter facts of life stemming from the severe economic decline forced leading clergymen into new ways of thinking and acting. The mood of optimism and faith in the system that had characterized the 1920's was dispelled. For some ministers this meant a change in politics, for others it meant more attention to basic economic matters or a concentration upon protest and for still others a heavier reliance upon other-worldly religion and diatribes against materialism. Even those ministers who were less inclined to change were affected by the new rhetoric and activity of some of their fellow pastors, the actions taken by community groups and the new responses on the part of all levels of government. The established churches were now faced with a new situation, large numbers of their own membership unemployed or in marginal jobs. The difficulty of the black man lowest down was in a sense brought closer to all members of the community by the Depression.

The initial response of the churches to the Depression was an increase in social welfare activities in the winter of 1930-1931 as unemployment and accompanying poverty deepened to crisis proportions. The churches were not unprepared for such work, for they had always offered basic kinds of relief services to their members. The work in the early years of the 1930's was simply an increase in these activities. Abyssinian Baptist's welfare programs were by far the most extensive. The church entered the 1930's financially much more able to take on the increased burdens of social welfare work. The senior Powell had long been an advocate of the socially committed, institutional church, and his son, who joined the staff in 1930, was even more outspoken in his insistence that the church respond to the everyday economic needs of the community. The elder Powell dramatically announced in December, 1930, that he was beginning a drive in the church to provide financial help for the poor in the community. "Men and women need something more than sympathy and prayers now," he said. "They need food. I will give $1,000 of my salary during the next three months to use in our kitchen to provide food for the hungry." Reverend Powell announced that his son would assume the duties as coordinator of the relief activities of the church. The church began to serve two meals a day, to distribute clothing, to provide aid in finding employment and even to offer increased employment in the church itself. The home relief program and the old age and widows pensions which had been begun earlier were continued, and a free nursery was set up. The school of adult education, which provided jobs for some, training for others and something to do for many, expanded and could boast of having 1,000 students by the end of the winter. All told, the church answered nearly 40,000 requests for aid in the winter of 1930-1931.[1]

Although with less munificence, other churches responded to the difficulties of that winter. St. Mark's, Mother Zion, St. James, Bethel, Emmanuel, St. Philip's and Rush Memorial began to serve meals on a more or less regular basis, cooperating so that each served at a different time during the week. Almost every church distributed food, clothing and toys through Christmas baskets and attempted to provide minimal relief for its members. St. James and Union Baptist created work for the unemployed, and most churches served as employment agencies for the few jobs that became available. Reverend Bolden at First Emmanuel, inspired by the Biblical phrase, "Ye are the salt of the Earth," suggested that his church buy salt and that the members sell it to the community, thereby providing work relief. A. Clayton Powell called on all ministers to follow his example and give up their salaries for three months to raise funds needed to feed the hungry. Reverend Shelton Bishop headed the Harlem Co-operating Committee on Relief and Unemployment formed in 1930 to stimulate activity and to coordinate the work of the churches, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., various charity organizations and the Urban League. The Harlem League of the Greater Federation of Churches, headed by Reverend John W. Robinson, decided that dedication to social welfare programs should be the most immediate task of all churches.[2]

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[1] Age, December 6, 1930, January 17, 1931; Abyssinian Baptist Church, Thirty-fifth Annual Report: From May 1, 1932 to April 30, 1933 (no imprint); Sydney French, "Biographical Sketch of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr."; Waring Cuney, "Activity of the Churches during the Depression," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--The Church in New York" (Schomburg Collection); Powell, Against the Tide, 196.

Although the Depression had by no means ended after the winter of 1930-1931, the widespread welfare activities of the Harlem churches had. Faced with a dwindling income and heavy debts, the churches were forced to cut back their relief expenditures as the Depression worsened. Even debt-free Abyssinian, which had answered nearly 40,000 requests for aid in 1930-1931, was by 1932-1933 responding to only about 3,000. As the churches and other private organizations cut back their relief activities, the relief from government sources increased so that public funds soon became the primary source of social welfare aid to the community. The role of the ministers in this new pattern became that of adviser, coordinator and critic of the public effort. Ministers believed that without constant attention to the public relief programs, "Mr. Colored Man may well expect to find his place allotted him somewhere near the end of the line." Ministers, then, served as watchdogs to prevent racial discrimination in the public relief activities.[3]

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[2] Age, November 29, 1930, December 13, 1930, December 20, 1930, January 3, 1931, January 31, 1931, February 28, 1931; Amsterdam, January 1, 1930, August 20, 1930, November 12, 1930, December 3, 1930, December 17, 1930, December 24, 1930, January 24, 1931; The Church Magnet, December 14, 1930.

Reverend Imes was made chairman of the Harlem Division of the Emergency Unemployment Committee in 1931, which was to serve as a clearing house for all the relief agencies, public and private, working in Harlem. On the original committee were Shelton Bishop and Adam Powell, Jr. Imes on several occasions used his position to criticize discriminatory practices in the dispensation of public relief and in finding jobs for those unemployed. In 1934, A. Clayton Powell, Sr., staged a mass meeting at Abyssinian to protest discrimination in the Relief Administration of New York. Thomas Harten was also a frequent critic of discrimination on relief projects. John Howard Johnson served on advisory committees for the W.P.A. and the Welfare Department, and Lorenzo King headed the Juvenile Aid Bureau and served on the Federal Arts Project. Churches throughout the 1930's were used as centers for various public relief projects, especially those sponsored by the W.P.A. St. Martin's,

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[3] The Church Magnet, December 14, 1930; Cuney, "Activity of the Churches during the Depression."

Abyssinian, Salem, St. Philip's, St. Mark's and Union all had at one time or another education centers financed by W.P.A. funds. The Adult Education Project centered at St. Mark's, for instance, registered upwards of 1,000 students and employed over 20 teachers. Ministers continued to play leading roles in the activities of the New York Urban League, the chief private relief organization operating in Harlem in the 1930's.[4]

Though the direct relief activity of the churches was severely curtailed, the traditional role as the center of a whole range of social activities seemed to increase. Adult education classes, Bible schools, drama groups, choral societies, orchestras, prayer groups, Boy and Girl Scout troops, athletic organizations, discussion groups, Red Cross units, art classes and all the social clubs flourished. If the churches could not provide the unemployed food and clothing, they at least provided something to do. The doors of these established churches "were hardly ever closed" during th Depression.[5]

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[4] *Age*, October 17, 1931, October 24, 1931, November 21, 1931, November 19, 1932, December 22, 1934, December 29, 1934, December 11, 1937, June 11, 1938, January 21, 1939, October 14, 1939; *Amsterdam*, October 21, 1931, November 18, 1931, December 2, 1931, March 30, 1935, June 20, 1936, March 20, 1937, May 1, 1937, January 1, 1938, May 17, 1941; *The Church Magnet*, December 14, 1930; New York Urban League, *Annual Report, 1934* (New York, 1935); New York Urban League, *Annual Report, 1937* (New York, 1938); New York Urban League, *Annual Report, 1940*; Cuney, "Activities of the Churches during the Depression"; A. J. Gary, "Brief History of St. Mark's Church," manuscript research paper, in Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City, "Negroes of New York--The Church in New York" (Schomburg Collection); Baxter R. Leach, "Negro Churches of Harlem," in *ibid.*; Louis B. Bryan, "Salem M.E. Church Educational Center," in *ibid.*

The leading ministers expressed varying points of view on just what the role of the church should be in a time of economic crisis. The dominant voices were of those who insisted that the church had to take an active part in the solution of everyday problems. The younger men--William Lloyd Imes, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., John Howard Johnson, Shelton Bishop and David Licorish--advocated not only that the church broaden its activities to become a center of social service to the community, but spoke of the church as being capable of leading the country toward a change in the fundamental structure of American society. In their view, the church was the one institution that could tap the power of the scorned and oppressed black masses. A seminar of leading black and white churchmen and laymen at Yale Divinity School in 1931, attended by Imes and the senior Powell, suggested, in a paper called "The Task of the Negro Church," exactly this role for the Negro church.

> The existing capitalistic system is in fundamental and diametric opposition to the spirit and teachings of Jesus and is contrary to the highest

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[5] Age, December 24, 1932; Amsterdam, October 25, 1933; Ted Yates, "Churches in Negro Harlem," manuscript research paper, in **Writers' Program, Work Projects Administration in New York City**, "Negroes of New York-- The Church in New

> welfare of the workers.
>
> The Negro church ought to be the first institution in America taking a stand for righteousness, because in its maintenance, make up, and leadership it is proletarian....
>
> The Negro church should set itself to the task of developing a more prophetic and fearless technique in making applicable the implications of the religion of Jesus in relation to our social order.
>
> Every Negro church must discover and develop a type of leadership that would do for America and the Negro race what Gandhi has done for India and what Jesus has done for the world.[6]

Some of the older ministers, as well, spoke more insistently for a socially committed and active church. The A.M.E. and A.M.E.Z. bishops urged their ministers to take the lead in providing for the welfare of the masses and to emphasize "political and economic as well as spiritual welfare." "My idea is that a church that does not minister to the material and social needs of its community, as it does to the spiritual needs of the people, has no business in that community," said Reverend H. P. Anderson of Bethel. "The world is losing faith in an inactive Christianity," said Reverend Thomas J. B. Harris of Rendall Presbyterian. "The social need of a people is a challenge which Christianity and the church must face and accept.[7]

York" (Schomburg Collection); Abyssinian Baptist Church, Thirty-fifth Annual Report; John Howard Johnson, "Where His Servants Meet," A Place of Adventure, 21.

[6] Holloway, 45-47.

[7] Age, August 18, 1934, February 13, 1937, March 1, 1941; Amsterdam, February 19, 1930, April 9, 1938.

A. Clayton Powell, always an advocate of the social gospel and the institutional church, spoke in the 1930's in much more radical terms. In a speech before the annual meeting of the N.A.A.C.P. in 1932, he indicated his sympathy for the goals espoused by Communists and Socialists. "You will have to admit," he said, "that the experience of the last two years have taught us that they are on the right track, despite the fact that they do not always use the best methods. There is bound to be a more equal distribution of wealth if we are going to stave off an economic world revolution that will make all other revolutions look like a dog fight in a back yard." Powell wrote several books in the 1930's, including his autobiography, a novel and a collection of sermons, all of which put forth an ideological position to the left of that he had espoused earlier. The hero of his novel, Picketing Hell, was a Baptist pastor who matured during his career so that

> "instead of forever harping on such picayune sins as dancing and card playing, his heavily loaded gospel gun was aimed at selfishness, intolerance, prejudice, municipal, state and national corruption."[8]

Although the voice of the social activist seemed dominant among the leading clergy in the 1930's, fundamentalism with emphasis on the next world and social and economic conservatism were not dead doctrines even for some ministers of well-established churches. A. Clayton Powell spoke out against these fundamentalists, saying that the church was paving the way for its own collapse because of the dominance of outmoded fundamentalism in the pulpit. In an article written for the Amsterdam in 1935 entitled "The Silent Church," he said:

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[8] Age, January 9, 1932; A. Clayton Powell, Picketing Hell: A Fictitious Narrative (New York, 1942), 180.

> For the most part the modern preachers are discoursing about the sins of the ancient Egyptians and Philistines, while the present-day Philistines are shamelessly stalking through the land defying the Church of the Living God....Ninety per cent of the churches, white and colored, are silent on these damnable social sins. The preachers are feeding the people on fundamentalism and religious traditions instead of telling them how to get food and fundamental human rights.[9]

A familiar conservative fundamentalist theme was that the Depression was God's punishment for the moral bankruptcy and materialism of modern civilization. "Our modern civilization has been founded on materialistic foundations and it is being shaken down," said William P. Hayes of Mt. Olivet. J. E. Sargeant of Union Congregational Church told his congregation that "the world is suffering from a flood of want, which is God's way of reaching man." High on the list of sins were dancing, card playing and theatre going, but the highest was drinking. Thus, repeal of prohibition was seen as deepening the moral chaos which lay at the seat of the causes of the Depression. "Liquor stores and beer gardens are lighting up the blocks," said a guest pastor at Metropolitan Baptist in 1937. "Men ignore the teachings of Jesus and build their hope upon the Epicurean philosophy of life which says, 'Eat, drink and be merry today, for tomorrow you may die.'" Others viewed the Depression as another of the burdens blacks traditionally were forced to bear and, thus, counselled looking "forward to the future with an attitude of hopefulness, resignation, and joyful anticipation." "Our troubles today are God's way of preparing us to meet him." In the face of a year full of "failure, unemployment, and suicides," Reverend Hayes recommended in 1932, "smiling and looking on the bright side of life, and thus spreading sunshine and encouragement." "Beautiful spirits," he pointed out, "come out of suffering." There could be only one solution to the Depression according to this line of thinking--faith in the power and goodness of God. "Man's world will change when his joy is restored; when the individual finds joy, then will the nations have joy; only shall we achieve such a world when we receive the joy of God's salvation."[10]

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[9] Amsterdam, February 16, 1935.

Although the traditional theology of many of Harlem's ministers limited their ability to deal realistically with the Depression, a far more important limitation was the financial instability of the churches. Almost without exception, church income decreased precipitously after 1929, a situation which made it virtually impossible for those churches that had amassed huge debts during the building boom of the 1920's to do much more than hold off their creditors. Ministers had to devote a great deal of time to raising money and to reorganizing the finances of their churches. Several, including Nazarene Congregational, Bethel A.M.E. of Brooklyn and St. Ambrose Protestant Episcopal, were actually dispossessed after mortgage foreclosure. And a number of others, including the well-endowed St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal and St. Mark's Methodist Episcopal,were forced to refinance their mortgages or give up some of their outside holdings. Significantly, St. James Presbyterian, St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal and Abyssinian Baptist, the churches led by Imes, Johnson and the two Powells, were among the few that had no serious financial problems during the decade.[11]

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[10] Age, July 11, 1931, October 31, 1931, January 9, 1932, February 13, 1937, December 3, 1938; Amsterdam, October 1, 1930, May 8, 1937.

It would seem, as well, that the intense competition that had always been a part of Harlem religious life deterred the capacity of the churches to act forcefully to alleviate social problems. Instances of split congregations, of bitter personal clashes between ministers, of acrimonious religious politics and of corruption on all levels were, if anything, more numerous in the 1930's than ever before. And the cults and the storefronts continued to increase in number and size adding further uncertainty to an already chaotic situation.

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[11] Greater New York Federation of Churches, Negro Churches in Manhattan, 11-18; Brown,"Negro Religious Worship in New York City from 1625 to 1947," appendix; Age, December 16, 1933, December 23, 1933, April 14, 1934, June 23, 1934, August 21, 1937; Amsterdam, December 13, 1933, December 20, 1933, May 19, 1934, June 16, 1934.

The A.M.E. Church was as before the center of a good deal of dissension both in the local churches and on the national level. In 1933, Bethel A.M.E. refused to abide by a decision of its unpopular bishop, William Heard, transferring Bethel's pastor out of the parish. Members of the congregation barred the door of the church against the new minister and forced him to appeal to the courts for an injunction against the congregation. At the Annual Conference held in New York in 1933, a member of the Bethel congregation physically attacked Bishop Heard as he was preaching a sermon, and, early in 1934, Heard was booed when he attempted to speak at Bethel. In 1935, members of the Bridge Street Church in Brooklyn, unhappy over the transfer of their minister by Heard, formed a new church with the transferred minister, Charles W. Stewart, as pastor. Denominational proceedings were brought against Reverend Stewart by the A.M.E. Bishops in 1936. During the trial Stewart's followers from Bridge Street precipitated a riot. Upon being removed as pastor of Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in 1934, Reverend G. W. Thomas sued Bishop Heard for back salary due him. Remarking upon the fact in mid-1936 that there had been no controversies in his jurisdiction that year, Heard pointed out that the work of the General Conference had kept him busy, but he promised that he would soon "certainly do something about those of you who think you own your congregation."[12]

The national politics of the A.M.E. Church were no smoother. At the 1932 Quadrennial Conference, three bishops were suspended for misappropriation of funds and inefficiency in office. Reverdy Ransom later noted that one of the bishops was ousted because of "his known affections for women church members." In 1935, a meeting of the bishops of Little Rock, Arkansas, was marred by a name-calling bout and a fist fight between two of the church leaders. At the 1936 Quadrennial Conference, Bishop Heard was accused of misappropriating funds entrusted to him, and there was an attempt to censure Bishop Sims because of his recent remarriage after a divorce.[13]

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[12] Age, June 2, 1933, June 10, 1933, June 17, 1933, July 22, 1933, February 17, 1934, February 24, 1934, March 3, 1934, June 8, 1935, October 19, 1935, June 27, 1936; Amsterdam, June 22, 1932, May 31, 1933, July 5, 1933, January 24, 1934, June 2, 1934, December 1, 1934, June 8, 1935, June 15, 1935, June 27, 1936.

[13] Ransom, "Confessions of a Bishop," 80; Age, May 21,

The A.M.E. Church was not alone in its troubles. Members of the St. Barnabas Protestant Episcopal Church picketed their church in 1934 to protest the removal of Reverend Lemuel Drake. Both the Fleet Street A.M.E.Z. and the Rush Memorial A.M.E.Z. churches were in danger of breaking up over the transfer of popular ministers. In 1939, trustees of the Walker Memorial Baptist Church ousted their pastor, Reverend Saunders, because of alleged mishandling of the church funds. Saunders, supported by a large part of the congregation, continued to preach and took his case to court claiming that the trustees had no legal right to remove him if the church membership opposed. The Supreme Court of New York finally decided the case on appeal in favor of Saunders in 1941. When he returned to the church to assume control, he was met by a large number of church members opposed to him who refused to let him enter. Reverend James K. Humphrey, founder of the United Sabbath Day Adventist Church, was sued three times in the 1930's--once for alienation of affections by a husband who claimed the pastor was father of his wife's child, once for fraud in connection with land he was selling to church members and once for producing a play without the permission of the author.[14]

1932, March 2, 1935, May 2, 1936; Amsterdam, May 11, 1932, May 18, 1932, May 23, 1936.

[14] Age, May 12, 1934, May 19, 1934, May 26, 1934,

Even Abyssinian Baptist was not immune from internal difficulties. In 1935, Reverend Powell, Sr., called for the resignation of the president of the Friendly Society, claiming that he had misused its funds. When the president and the officers refused to resign, claiming that the Society was a separate institution and not under the direct control of the church, Powell brought suit to force the officers to turn over the books and records to him. Baptist national politics as expressed through the National Baptist Convention were also lively, enhanced by the presence of Thomas Harten as a vice-president. Harten, whose political disputes often became personal vendettas, turned a national meeting in 1931 into a shouting match when his candidate for Convention president was attacked, threatened to engage George Sims in a fist fight on the floor of a meeting in 1935 and challenged Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., to a duel in 1940 after Powell had criticized a former president of the Convention and a friend of Harten as a "grafter."[15]

In an era when the church was struggling for survival and when many sincere and hard-working ministers were trying their best to make their institutions relevant to

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October 27, 1934, January 25, 1936, July 18, 1936, June 17, 1939, February 3, 1940, July 6, 1940; Amsterdam, July 6, 1932, May 12, 1934, June 23, 1934, June 10, 1939, February 3, 1940, June 7, 1941, June 28, 1941.

[15] Age, October 10, 1931, January 5, 1935, January 12, 1935, January 19, 1935, February 9, 1935, March 16, 1935, May 11, 1935, December 28, 1940; Amsterdam, August 19, 1931, September 2, 1931.

the crisis in society, the dissension, the excessive competition between congregations, the corruption, the petty politics and the personal vilification levied at a number of individual ministers severely weakened the leadership potential of the black minister. As storefronts and cults increased, so also did the number of unscrupulous individuals ready to take advantage of the desperation of the poor. As economic difficulties increased and churches became pressed for funds, men sometimes responded by finding fault with their fellow men and competing more actively among themselves rather than working together to lift the burden of oppression. With ministers referring to each other as "filthy curs," "stray cats," "adulterers," "clergical crooks" and "magicians" and with the newspapers and the unprinted gossip replete with stories of immorality in the pulpit, the standing in the community of the black minister could not help but be weakened. Although the established ministers of Harlem churches were on the whole responsible men of good principles to whom the popular image certainly could not apply, their job was made much more difficult as a result of the negative image some in the ministerial profession were fostering. Thus, though Harlem ministers early responded to the Depression with increased social welfare activities and some criticism of the economic structure of society, the effectiveness of this response was limited by a shortage of funds, by a traditionalist theology, by a lack of cooperation among the various ministers and churches and by the developing negative image of Negro ministers to which the behavior of some contributed.[16]

Beside the welfare activities, which traditionally had been in the religious sphere, some of Harlem's ministers were prompted by Depression conditions to offer longer range solutions to the race's economic problems. Perhaps the most serious of these problems and certainly the one that received the most attention was the lack of employment opportunities for black Americans. As more and more blacks lost their jobs in the early years of the 1930's, attention began to be focused on the job situation in Harlem. The black community was all black in residence only; there were 18,000 jobs in Harlem and only 5,000, usually the most menial, were held by blacks; there were 4,600 merchants in Harlem and only 266 were black. The blacks reasoned: where the great bulk of customers were black, the great majority of workers should also be black. This was the policy followed by the white communities, why not by the black? "The fortunes of all colored people should be intertwined," said Reverend Johnson. "We must spend our money among our own people. We must let it circulate from one to the other."[17]

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[16] Age, April 8, 1933, August 12, 1933, March 2, 1940, December 28, 1940; Amsterdam, February 28, 1934.

In the summer of 1930, A. Clayton Powell, Sr., taking his cue from the recent successful boycott in Chicago, organized the Committee for More and Better Jobs and issued a call to black pastors in New York City to "act together here and now and use our power as consumers to open up more and better jobs for our group in chain stores, public utilities, department stores and in fact any commercial enterprise which is largely supported by our patronage." The Committee received support from a good number of Harlem's pastors who indicated that they frequently advised their congregations to patronize stores that were willing to employ blacks. Reverend Powell, who hoped to make the boycott more than haphazard bits of advice from various pulpits, suggested a community-wide boycott of the New York Telephone Company which employed "not one Negro girl." He suggested to his fellow pastors that they advise their congregations: "Why telephone at all when you can either write or use the Western Union?"[18]

Although the attempt at an organized boycott collapsed, this committee did indicate a concern with the lack of opportunity for blacks interested in obtaining white-collar positions and did indicate a willingness to take more drastic actions than in the past to alleviate such problems. It is important to note here that when concerned about broadening employment opportunities the leading ministers tended to concentrate on helping the black middle class. The welfare programs of the churches were designed for the unemployed masses, and these ministers were concerned to see that there was no starvation and homelessness. But, when they talked about expanding job opportunities, they were thinking of the young men and women and their parents who made up much of the membership of many of the established churches. For these the need was for permanent jobs and respectability that could not come from welfare.

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[17] Johnson, "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work," 61-68.

[18] The Dunbar News, June 4, 1930, June 18, 1930, July 2, 1930, July 16, 1930.

In 1932 and 1933, D. Ward Nichols and Lorenzo King helped to form the Harlem Business, Professional and Consumers Association which combined the efforts of the Harlem Business Men's League, the Colored Merchants Association and the Harlem Housewives League. The Association hoped to stimulate both the employment of black people in existing businesses in Harlem and the beginning of new businesses for blacks. There was an attempt to encourage blacks to buy only from businesses that employed members of the race. "Every time you spend a dollar in a store in Harlem that refuses to employ your boy or girl, you are sinning against God," said Reverend King. The group did not have much success by itself, but it did lend some aid to the wider boycott of the One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street stores in 1934. Although this group repeated the familiar message of the necessity of black-owned businesses, little practical action was taken. In fact, this traditional panacea became a relatively rare theme in the 1930's. The Depression seemed to have seriously shaken the traditional reliance upon black capitalism as the keystone of the race's progress.[19]

In 1933, Reverend Adam Powell, Jr., led a fight for improved opportunity for black doctors and nurses at Harlem Hospital. Although there were black physicians and nurses on the hospital staff and one, Dr. Louis T. Wright, was Secretary of the Board, Powell supported the charge made by a number of black doctors that 80 per cent of the staff was white and that the black doctors and nurses were given the lowest level jobs and held back from advancement. When, after investigation, the N.A.A.C.P. reported no cause for concern, the cry of "whitewash" was raised, because Dr. Wright was on the N.A.A.C.P. Board. Powell organized mass meetings at Abyssinian in which he vowed never to forsake the race for the friendship of those in power. Finally, in April, he led a march on City Hall to demand an investigation of the hospital, the removal of Dr. Wright and the addition of more Negroes to the staff.[20]

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[19] Age, October 8, 1932, December 16, 1933; Melville J. Weiss, "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work: An Analysis of Consumer Action against Employment Discrimination in Harlem, 1934-1940" (M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1941), 13.

Though the issue was never settled to the satisfaction of Powell, it was an important event because it brought his name into prominence as an uncompromising leader willing to use new and more radical methods to achieve racial equality. One of Powell's biographers, writing from information provided by Powell himself, numbered the marchers on city hall at 6,000. Using these figures, Powell viewed the event as the first example of the many great outpourings of the black masses behind causes led by himself. The *Age*, notably friendly to Dr. Wright and the N.A.A.C.P., numbered the marchers at two dozen. The *Amsterdam*, more friendly to Powell, did not comment on the number. This incident probably was less significant as an indication of the "powerful weapon of the black masses" than as a step in Powell's progress toward leadership of Harlem, as a challenge to the older leadership and as an initial attempt to use the more radical weapon of mass action. Since, however, the fight was essentially for more jobs for Negro doctors and nurses, certainly a middle-class goal, it would be a mistake to view this as a great battle for the black masses.[21]

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[20] *Age*, October 8, 1932, January 14, 1933, March 11, 1933, April 29, 1933; *Amsterdam*, January 25, 1933, February 15, 1933, April 26, 1933, June 7, 1933, December 19, 1936; Powell, *Against the Tide*, 220-232.

[21] *Age*, April 29, 1933; *Amsterdam*, April 26, 1933; Lewis, *Adam Clayton Powell*, 40-41.

In 1934, attention turned to the lack of employment opportunity for blacks in the white-owned retail establishments in Harlem. John Howard Johnson of St. Cyprian's appealed personally to the larger stores and to the Uptown Chamber of Commerce to hire more Negro clerks. The white merchants refused, arguing that Negroes tended to avoid dealing with black clerks because of the fear of inferior service. Further, the store owners said, the menial positions in their stores were filled exclusively by Negroes. Johnson then appealed to his congregation to save all sales slips from purchases made at Blumstein's, the largest department store on One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street. He planned to present the slips to the owner as evidence of the amount of economic power the black community held. Johnson also appealed to other ministers, most importantly William Lloyd Imes, and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and community leaders, including Fred Moore, for support, and organized the Citizens' League for Fair Play to coordinate efforts to bring pressure upon the merchants.[22]

Meanwhile, a more radical group, The Industrial and Clerical Alliance, led by a black nationalist, Sufi Abdul Hamid, had already begun to picket stores on One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street for more jobs for blacks. Apparently partly because he feared that the radicalism of Sufi's group would stir up racial animosity and "unsavory notoriety" for Harlem and partly because he feared that if Sufi were successful it would be his followers who would get the jobs, Reverend Johnson "reluctantly" decided in June on a boycott of Blumstein's to bring results. Through the Citizens' League, the pages of the Age and the pulpits of Harlem's churches, Harlem's leading citizens appealed to all of Harlem's residents to stay out of Blumstein's. "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" was the rallying cry. After more than a month of intensive pressure joined by the Industrial and Clerical Alliance, Blumstein's relented and signed an agreement with the Citizens' League to hire a limited number of Negro clerks.[23]

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[22] Age, May 26, 1934; Johnson, "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work," 60; William A. Muraskin, "The Harlem Boycott of 1934 and Its Aftermath" (M.A. Thesis, Columbia University, 1966), 8-11; Weiss, 51-58.

The campaign did not end here. Other stores were picketed, community pressure was applied and a beginning was made from which the merchants located in Harlem could not retreat. But the coalition that supported the original boycott broke up after the Blumstein's settlement. In the original agreement, Blumstein's was to hire 15 Negro clerks the first month and 20 the second. Sufi's group contended that the Citizens' League agreement had been only token improvement and pointed out further that Reverend Johnson had condoned the employment of only the lightest skinned

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[23] Age, June 23, 1934, August 4, 1934; Muraskin, 11; McKay, 191-194.

Negro girls. The Industrial and Clerical Alliance continued to picket Blumstein's, but with diminishing success. Two recent studies of the campaign agree that Johnson was interested in finding jobs for displaced white-collar workers and that he distrusted the proletarian nature of Sufi's group, fearing that if given white-collar jobs they would bring discredit on the race. To some, like Sufi, this meant that the black masses were being used to pressure for the gains of the black middle class, while their own condition remained desperate. To others, like Johnson, it meant opening another avenue of opportunity so that more could rise to the middle class and put the community on a firmer basis.[24]

Despite the division, the boycott was an important success because it involved more community support than anything like it before and because it led to the formation of a more or less permanent coalition of community leaders led by Johnson, Imes and Powell which continued to press for increased employment opportunities. In 1935, the group threatened a resumption of the boycott in order to speed up the hiring of Negroes in One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street stores. These ministers were also critical of the discrimination in the jobs created by such agencies as the W.P.A. and the Home Relief Bureau. The protests were especially vehement in the summer of 1937 when the cutback in W.P.A. employment prompted Harlem leaders to point out that almost all workers laid off were black.[25]

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[24] Age, August 4, 1934, August 25, 1934, September 22, 1934, February 2, 1935; Amsterdam, August 4, 1934, September 15, 1934, October 20, 1934, November 3, 1934; McKay, 194-195; Muraskin, 42; Weiss, 51-59; Yates, "St. Martin's Episcopal Church."

In 1938, two separate groups were formed to press for more black employment--the Harlem Job Committee, which included Reverends Johnson, Harten, Sims, King, Cullen, Robeson and Ethelred Brown, and the Greater New York Coordinating Committee for Employment, which was chaired by Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and William Imes. The Harlem Job Committee seemed to assume the place of the Citizens' League for Fairplay in that it defined its main purpose to be that of working together with the businessmen in Harlem, both white and black, to increase the number of black employees. The Coordinating Committee, on the other hand, was more closely allied with labor groups, especially the Harlem Labor Union and the American Labor Party, and was willing to use the threat or the practice of mass boycott to achieve increases in employment. The Coordinating Committee focused often on the job situation in the city as a whole rather than simply on Harlem. In the summer of 1938, the Coordinating Committee picketed stores on One Hundred Twenty-fifth Street and Liggett's Drug Stores and achieved limited agreements to hire more blacks in both cases. The Committee then turned its attention to the discriminatory hiring practices of Consolidated Edison and New York Telephone companies. A threat to appeal to all Harlemites to turn off their lights, to dial wrong numbers and to pay bills in pennies resulted in the utilities agreeing to hire a few Negroes.[26]

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[25] Age, October 26, 1935, August 15, 1936, July 17, 1937, September 4, 1937; Amsterdam, December 19, 1936, February 13, 1937, June 26, 1937, July 10, 1937, February 19, 1938.

The Coordinating Committee protested the discriminatory hiring practices at the 1939 World's Fair and the Jim Crow policy followed by a number of the exhibits and picketed the opening of the Fair in May. The Committee also began to make public the discrimination against blacks practiced by the New York City Omnibus Corporation, the Fifth Avenue Coach Lines and the Transport Workers Union (T.W.U). This criticism finally came to a head in the spring of 1941 in the midst of a strike against the two bus companies by the T.W.U. Powell and Imes, speaking for the Committee demanded that any settlement had to involve the hiring of blacks as bus drivers and mechanics, jobs which had previously been denied them. Although Michael Quill of the T.W.U. agreed publicly with the grievances as stated by Powell and Imes, he refused to allow any of his workers to lose their seniority rights. After a boycott by Harlem residents lasting nearly a month, an agreement was signed whereby 100 Negroes would get jobs as bus drivers and 70 as mechanics, but only after all the union men who had been laid off were rehired.[27]

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[26] Amsterdam, April 2, 1938, April 23, 1938, May 21, 1938, August 13, 1938, November 19, 1938, November 26, 1938; Weiss, 95; Lewis, Adam Clayton Powell, 43-45.

In this dispute, as in so many others, there was a good deal of criticism levelled against the Coordinating Committee for being ready to compromise too much to achieve a settlement. It was felt by many in the Harlem Labor Union that Powell and Imes had enhanced their reputations without really bettering the conditions for black workingmen in New York. Again, it should be emphasized that the central objective of the Coordinating Committee was to increase the number of jobs, especially skilled and white-collar positions, available to blacks. The Harlem Labor Union, on the other hand, was as much or more interested in improving the wages and working conditions of blacks who already had jobs, most of them in menial positions. In effect, critics again accused the ministers of using the mass to pressure for the gains achieved by the middle class.[28]

The amount of ministerial pressure for increased employment opportunity was, then, considerable, and the pressure was increased by the threat of such direct action tactics as the boycott. There was, as well, no lack of reluctance on the part of ministers to support increased black participation in labor unions in the 1930's. Many had supported A. Philip Randolph and the Sleeping Car Porters since its inception. The strike against the Amsterdam by its editorial workers was vigorously backed by more than a dozen leading ministers, many of whom urged their congregations to boycott the paper. Powell led attempts to organize drugstore workers and shoe store workers in 1936, and Imes supported a similar attempt by hospital workers in 1940. Both Powell and Johnson had important connections in the American Labor Party after its formation in 1936. Still, the fight for unionization seemed to be of only secondary interest to Harlem's ministers, even Powell and Imes who spoke in radical terms about the need for changes in the capitalistic system. It was easier to organize the masses to fight for the rights of equal employment opportunities for individuals than it was to organize the masses to fight for improved opportunities as a group. The American ethic was deeply imbedded not only in the black leaders but in the masses as well. Despite the fact that the 1930's were characterized by protest action a good deal more direct and militant than in the past, still the dominant objective was a remarkably traditional and familiar one--equal opportunity. The objective was well pointed out by A. Clayton Powell, Sr., when he told his congregation the story of two black boys watching a locomotive.

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[27] Age, April 5, 1941, April 12, 1941, April 26, 1941; Amsterdam, April 30, 1938, April 1, 1939, April 8, 1939, April 22, 1939, May 6, 1939, March 22, 1941, March 29, 1941, April 5, 1941, April 12, 1941, April 26, 1941

[28] Age, July 26, 1941, September 6, 1941, September 27, 1941; Amsterdam, November 12, 1938.

> "I wish I was a white man so I could run that thing like he runs it," said one.
>
> "If the white man will only give me a chance, I will run it, as black as I am," said the other.
>
> There is the race problem in a nutshell and every investigator, black and white, knows it before he starts to investigate. All the Negro wants or deserves is the same chance the white man has. Whatever the Constitution, or the Bill of Rights, or custom gives the white man, the Negro wants the same, nothing less, nothing more. When this is done the race problem will be solved. Until this is done, there are going to be riots, ruin, and hell.[29]

The easing of the Depression in the late 1930's and early 1940's brought a renewal of interest from the pulpits in the concept of black-owned business. A number of sermons preached in 1939, 1940 and 1941 emphasized the necessity of Negroes owning, operating and patronizing their own businesses. The Brown Bomber Baking Company made an especially strong appeal in 1940 and 1941, offering to sell its products through the churches with the church receiving a commission. The company was often used as an example by leading ministers who urged the need for more and stronger black-owned businesses. Some, such as Imes and Ethelred

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[29] Age, October 19, 1935, November 2, 1935, November 23, 1935; Amsterdam, November 21, 1936, October 19, 1940; A. Clayton Powell, "Riots and Ruins," Riots and Ruins (New York, 1945), 65.

Brown, argued the case for cooperative rather than profit-oriented businesses, but there was little direct action on this front. Only churches like the Refuge Church of Christ and movements such as those of Father Divine, Daddy Grace and Elder Michaux experimented in the area of cooperative economic enterprise.[30]

Though economic protests were dominant in the 1930's, black ministers did not overlook injustices in other areas of American life. On the national level, the Scottsboro boys case and the campaign for federal legislation to prevent lynching were the most important causes. The Scottsboro case was one movement that, at least on the surface, united the whole spectrum of black leadership. Even though a principal backer of the move to free the boys was the Communist Party, practically every minister and every minister's organization in New York City supported the organized protest movement. Mass meetings were held in a number of churches; Sunday and special collections were donated to the defense fund; Bishop, Powell, Jr., and Garner were on the original National Defense Committee; J. W. Brown served as treasurer of the second national committee; King led a protest delegation to the White House; and, the New York Conference of the A.M.E.Z. Church, the Baptist State Convention and the Interdenominational Preachers Association

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[30] Age, May 3, 1941; Amsterdam, October 24, 1936, January 21, 1939, January 27, 1940, October 5, 1940, March 15, 1941, April 26, 1941, May 3, 1941, August 16, 1941, October 4, 1941; William Lloyd Imes, "Race and Class Relations," Black Pastures, 117.

Convention and the Interdenominational Preachers Association of New York City all supported the defense committees financially and verbally. When the chief defense attorney, Samuel Liebowitz, threatened to resign from the case in 1934 because of his differences with the Communists, it was King, J. W. Brown, Bolden and Garner who convinced him to stay on.[31]

The outspoken Adam Powell, Jr., noted: "What Nazism is to the Jew, Scottsboro is to the Negro. It stands for cruelty, hate, oppression, bigotry, prejudice and mass murder." The fiery Thomas Harten spoke again and again about the "legal lynching of the nine Scottsboro boys." But the case also invoked fierce invective from more conservative men like J. W. Brown, Lorenzo King and Richard Bolden. "While we are fighting among ourselves," Reverend King told a mass meeting in 1931, "while we are shouting about getting the souls of Negroes into Heaven, the bodies of these same people are being burned, wrecked, exploited by American prejudice." Although the case dragged on to the end of the decade, partial success was achieved in 1937 when four of the nine boys were freed and came to New York to live with Thomas Harten who was appointed as their legal guardian. Two weeks later, the black community was shocked to learn that the boys, with Reverend Harten's approval, had signed a contract to appear at the Apollo Theatre on a bill that included the Harlem Play Girls Orchestra. Harten never lived down the public criticism that blamed him for exploiting the boys for his own personal gain.[32]

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[31] Age, October 8, 1932, April 22, 1933, December 9, 1933, December 30, 1933, November 3, 1934, February 22, 1936, October 23, 1937; Amsterdam, May 10, 1933, June 21, 1933, October 13, 1934, November 17, 1934.

The Scottsboro case brought to the surface again the demand for a federal anti-lynching bill, a demand that was pressed at mass meetings in churches and in sermons throughout the 1930's. The same ministers who were active in the Scottsboro case were active here, with Powell and Harten being the most outspoken. Such a bill was introduced in 1935 by Senators Robert Wagner and Edward Costigan, but was killed by Southern opposition. On the whole though, other than the Scottsboro and the anti-lynching movements and an occasional individual statement against segregation in the South or the condition of the black sharecroppers, there was relatively little attention paid to the national conditions of black people. The protest movement focused its attention at home and, for the most part, on economic conditions, where the situation was serious and where the chances of success were greater.[33]

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[32] Age, July 11, 1931, April 15, 1933, April 29, 1933, December 16, 1933, September 11, 1937; Amsterdam, September 16, 1931, February 15, 1936, August 21, 1937.

[33] Age, January 2, 1932, December 9, 1933, February 1, 1936, February 8, 1936, April 23, 1938; Amsterdam, January 25, 1936, February 6, 1937.

Besides the protests for more jobs and for increased welfare assistance, Harlem ministers led movements for better education through the public schools, against rent increases and for fair treatment by the police. Ministers such as Imes, Robinson, King, Sims and Johnson led movements at different times to bring to the attention of the public the deplorable conditions in black schools, the most blatant cases of prejudice by white teachers against their black students and the reality of de facto segregation achieved by redrawing school district lines. The Permanent Committee for Better Schools in Harlem, formed in 1936, continued to pressure the city authorities, and, in 1940, the committee's chairman, Reverend John W. Robinson, was appointed to the Manhattan Board of Education. Most of the pressure for change centered on improving conditions in black schools rather than integration.[34]

There were threats of staging a community-wide rent strike several times, and a number of mass meetings were held to protest living conditions and increases in rent. In 1936, a Consolidated Tenants League was formed which was backed by Powell and King, and just before World War II, the Harlem Tenants League was organized with Imes and Ethelred Brown in its leadership. Again, attention was primarily on improvement of conditions within the ghetto rather than on breaking down the walls of discrimination to make it possible to move out.[35]

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[34] Age, March 10, 1934; Amsterdam, May 10, 1933, March 28, 1936, April 18, 1936, January 20, 1940, September 27, 1941; State of New York, Second Report of the New York State Temporary Commission on the Condition of the Colored Urban Population to the Legislature of the State of New York (Albany, 1939), 1053-1057.

Ministers, even the most liberal theologically and politically, did not speak much about the ideal of full integration and complete unity with white American society in the 1930's. As thoughts turned inward to solving the desperate basic needs of such a large part of the population, thoughts of improving the whole society seemed even more distant. For instance, such a thing as Race Relations Sunday, which was celebrated in the 1920's by a significant number of black ministers who exchanged their pulpits with white ministers, was rarely observed in the 1930's. Reverend Imes was the only minister who made the ideal of an integrated society a major theme of his sermons, although Adam Powell, Jr., emphasized the need for the black and white laboring masses to unite together to reform society and the other leading ministers did not gainsay the ideal of integration. The goal of integration and actions taken to achieve that goal would not become central to the thinking of New York ministers until after World War II.[36]

The riot of 1935 well summed up the desperation many Harlem blacks felt toward the society in which they found themselves prisoners. When asked to comment on the causes of the riot, Harlem's leading ministers laid the blame on the deplorable economic conditions and on the increased discrimination against blacks. The hope stimulated by the 1934 boycotts followed by the depressing reality of only token gains in employment was seen by several as the clinching blow. Reverend Imes found the root of the riot in the unwillingness of Harlem commercial interests to employ blacks:

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[35] Age, October 9, 1937; Amsterdam, April 20, 1935, October 17, 1936, August 13, 1938, March 22, 1941.

[36] Age, February 20, 1937; Amsterdam, February 12, 1938.

> ...this trouble has its rootage in a very unfair attitude of the 125th Street commercial interests toward the Negro, as well as in the general unrest of a time of continued unemployment and maladjustment. Evidence shows that such employment was only grudgingly given, if at all, and that there is a deep resentment among some of the merchants and the employed whites at what they doubtless feel is the presumption of the Negro to demand a fair share of employment.

To blame "outsiders" and "professional agitators" for beginning the riot, as many in the white community were doing, was to misunderstand the situation and hide the fundamental causes, said Reverend Johnson. "Reds, radicals and rowdies were only the foam on the top of the boiling waters....What happened here last Tuesday was the explosion of a suppressed people who have been exploited by the business interests of this community."[37]

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[37] Age, March 30, 1935; Amsterdam, April 6, 1935.

George Sims spoke of the economic conditions that had "depressed and demoralized the majority." **Adam Powell** said that it "was not a riot; it was an open, unorganized protest against empty stomachs,overcrowded tenements, filthy sanitation, rotten foodstuffs, chiseling landlords and merchants, discrimination on relief, disenfranchisement, and against a disinterested administration." A great majority of the rioters, Powell said, "were men and women who have worked and held decent jobs in the past, but who have no reason or self-discipline when their bellies are rubbing their backbones." "Their ways of doing things that night may have been disorderly, loathsome and deplorable," he went on, "but so my friends were their homes."[38]

The economic conditions at the root of the riot demanded immediate attention. The Temporary Commission on the Conditions of the Colored Urban Population set up by the State Legislature after the riot suggested legislation to alleviate many of the problems that the black community through its protests had pointed out. Included were suggestions for legislation prohibiting unions from denying membership because of race, prohibiting public utilities and contractors performing public contracts from discrimination in their employment policies and prohibiting discrimination in public employment and in public, [illegible] and tax exempt housing.

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[38] Age, March 30, 1935; Post, March 27, 1935, March 28, 1935; Hickey and Edwin, 44.

limited-dividend and tax-exempt housing.[39]

The 1930's saw Harlem's ministers spend an increasing amount of time in political activities. More ministers ran for office, worked directly in the party organizations and campaigned actively for candidates. It would appear that several explanations lie behind their increased political activity. The increasing concentration of blacks in Harlem brought growing pressure on the local political organizations to open up more positions to Negroes. Black political power was beginning to play a more important role. Then, too, the economic difficulties of the Depression tended to heighten political debate and experimentation. There were in Harlem more serious calls than ever before for adherence to new radical political movements, based on either an all-black or all-working-class foundation. More importantly, the new problems and the new willingness to experiment brought a significant shift of black voters to the Democratic Party. In New York City, Mayor LaGuardia's Fusion movement further enlivened the city's politics. All of this meant that elections and politics in general in black areas would be more hotly contested than ever before. In a community where once only Republican politics were seriously discussed, now the Socialist, Communist, American Labor, Fusion, Recovery and Democratic parties were contending for the black vote. Ministers were in the forefront of most of these political organizations; thus, their traditional role as politicians loomed larger than before.

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[39] State of New York, Second Report of Temporary Commission on Colored Urban Population, 160-161.

The elections of 1930 and 1931 gave an indication of things to come. In 1930, although most of the ministers kept quiet or supported the Republicans, a few including Thomas Harten were strong backers of Governor Roosevelt. In addition to Roosevelt's victory, the Democrats also won the Assembly seats in the Nineteenth and Twenty-first districts for the first time in several years. Although this new Democratic strength was in the short term detrimental to the cause of black representation since blacks were in a stronger position in the Republican Party, it did foreshadow the wholesale shift into the Democratic Party that would occur by the end of the decade. In the municipal elections of 1931,the Democrats won the City Council seats in the districts encompassing Harlem,and thus the two black alderman who had been elected in the 1920's were replaced by white Democrats.[40]

President Hoover was still supported by a large majority of Harlem's pastors in 1932, being endorsed by clerics J. W. Brown, A. Clayton Powell, Bolden, Garner, Sims,

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[40] Age, November 1, 1930, November 15, 1930, November 7, 1931; Amsterdam, September 17, 1930, October 8, 1930, October 15, 1930, October 29, 1930, November 5, 1930.

Nichols, Licorish, Proctor, King, Heard and W. C. Brown as well as the Colored Baptist State Convention and the Interdenominational Preachers Association. The support for Hoover combined traditional Republicanism, opposition to the repeal of prohibition and a profound distrust of the Democrats for nominating for Vice President a man who had supported legislation denying voting rights to Negroes and who had opposed the anti-lynching bill. Reverend Henry Hugh Proctor summed up the reasons for the prevailing support of Hoover when he said:

> I favor Hoover because of the historic relation of his party toward my country and my race, his wide experience in travel, his administrative ability, his success in handling the difficult problems of the panic, the necessity for time to carry out policies initiated, and his constructive attitude on the liquor problem.[41]

There nevertheless was mounting opposition to maintaining the historic ties with the Republican Party. Thomas Harten stepped up his work in behalf of the Democrats and organized the Roosevelt-for-President Club among blacks in Brooklyn. He campaigned for but did not get the Democratic nomination for congressman-at-large from Brooklyn. Reverdy Ransom was chairman of the National Colored Roosevelt for President Committee. Farther on the left, perennial Socialist candidate for Congress from the

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[41] Age, September 24, 1932, October 15, 1932, October 22, 1932, October 29, 1932, November 5, 1932; Amsterdam, October 12, 1932, October 26, 1932, November 2, 1932.

Twenty-first District Frank Crosswaith received endorsements from Shelton Bishop, William Imes and Ethelred Brown, who was a Socialist candidate himself for the Assembly. Ministers such as Imes and John W. Robinson applauded the newly emerging political independence of the black voter. It was clear that economic problems were beginning to play a larger role in the political ideology of New York blacks and that disenchantment with the Republicans was growing as the economic difficulties of the Depression worsened. Once Franklin Roosevelt, as President, made it clear through his programs where he stood on these economic questions, black voters and leaders rushed to his support.[42]

In the mayoralty campaign of 1933, Fiorello LaGuardia and the Fusion ticket gained the tacit support of the majority of Harlem's leading ministers, but by no means was LaGuardia's support unanimous. The most important defection from the Fusionists came in the midst of the campaign when A. Clayton Powell announced his support of Recovery candidate, Joseph V. McKee, and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., was appointed McKee's campaign manager among colored voters in New York City. The senior Powell had deserted the Republicans, who had only the year before chosen him as a Presidential elector, because the party had become the prisoner of "the privileged and the moneyed few." LaGuardia's campaign provoked little excitement in black Harlem. None of the ministers, with the exception of Richard M. Bolden, lent much active support to his campaign. The ministers did, however, campaign for Fred Moore in his unsuccessful race for alderman on the Fusion ticket. There seemed to be no support at all among the ministers for the Democratic incumbent, John P. O'Brien. Even Thomas Harten who had been attempting to work his way into the regular Democratic organization supported McKee.[43]

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[42] Age, July 16, 1932, August 13, 1932, August 27, 1932, October 8, 1932; Amsterdam, September 28, 1932, October 5, 1932, October 12, 1932, October 19, 1932, October 26, 1932, November 16, 1932.

The municipal election well illustrated the dilemma in which black New Yorkers and their leaders were finding themselves. On the one hand, tradition and past records told a black New Yorker to vote Republican (Fusion). LaGuardia's record as a congressman and his campaign promises on questions of importance to black New Yorkers were the best of the three candidates. On the other hand, President Roosevelt had made an impressive beginning at alleviating some of the economic hardships of the Depression and McKee was Roosevelt's personal choice for mayor. The regular Democrats, however, were the best organized on the local level and often controlled the dispensation of relief funds and public employment. Apparently black voters voted in about equal numbers for the three candidates.[44]

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[43] Age, September 16, 1933, October 21, 1933, October 28, 1933, November 4, 1933, November 18, 1933; Amsterdam, October 25, 1933, November 1, 1933.

The Presidential election of 1936 stimulated a tremendous amount of political activity on the part of the leading black ministers. In the first place, President Roosevelt had obviously won over a good number of black voters in his first term, and this success was illustrated by the large number of ministers that supported the Democratic nominee in 1936. Under the banner of the Good Neighbor League headed by the elder Powell and Bishop R. R. Wright, Jr., of the A.M.E. Church, a number of ministers, most of whom had supported Republicans before, endorsed Roosevelt. Not to be outdone, another group of pastors formed the Clergy Crusaders Circle to organize support in the churches for Republican candidate Alfred M. Landon.[45]

Much attention was paid in 1936 to organizing the black vote so that it would be cast where it would do the most good for the race. There was talk early in the year of forming an all-black independent political party. Thomas Harten formed the Negro Square Deal Association to unite Negroes nationally and thereby deliver these votes to the political party that promised to do the most for the Negro. Harten later threw his support to Roosevelt.

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[44] Adding the predominantly black Nineteenth and Twenty-first Assembly districts together, LaGuardia had 14,767 votes, O'Brien, 13,051 and McKee, 9,626. Arthur Mann, LaGuardia Comes to Power, 1933 (New York, 1965), 160-161.

[45] Age, August 15, 1936, September 26, 1936, October 3, 1936, October 24, 1936, October 31, 1936; Amsterdam, September 5, 1936, September 12, 1936.

Reverend Sylvester Corrothers of Brooklyn organized the Non-partisan Negro Association also to mobilize black voting strength independent of the national parties. This group eventually endorsed Landon. Black ministers also worked actively for the American Labor Party which was formed in 1936 in an attempt to unite the working-class vote in New York. Adam Powell, Jr., who served as the party's campaign manager in Harlem, and John Howard Johnson both campaigned for Roosevelt under the American Labor Party banner. The results of the election showed that President Roosevelt had swept Harlem just as he had swept black communities across the country. This was probably the last election in which the black voter would be seriously reminded, as he was by such steadfast Republicans as J. W. Brown, Richard Bolden and Bishop Heard, of his political debt to the Republican Party. The community's point of view had shifted to a position much closer to the one advocated by Powell, Imes and Johnson, which was that blacks should vote not what their tradition but what their pocketbooks directed.[46]

The overwhelming support given Mayor LaGuardia by Harlem ministers in the 1937 election was another example of the new independence of black voters. Many of the same ministers who had led the campaign for Roosevelt in 1936--Powell, Sr., Johnson, Robinson, Imes--supported the mayor. And, as has been pointed out, Reverend Johnson made an unsuccessful race for the City Council, backed by the Fusion Party under the new proportional representation voting system.[47]

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[46] Age, May 16, 1936, August 1, 1936, August 15, 1936, August 29, 1936, September 19, 1936, September 26, 1936, October 10, 1936, October 24, 1936; Amsterdam, April 18, 1936, May 2, 1936, July 25, 1936, October 10, 1936, October 24, 1936, November 7, 1936; Johnson, speech to American Labor Party.

In 1938, Reverend Lorenzo King formed the Coalition Congressional Committee to pressure for Congressional redistricting so that black Harlem could elect its own congressman. The Committee, however, concentrated its efforts on uniting all Negroes in Harlem behind a black candidate for Congress. King was endorsed by the Committee and was nominated by the Republicans to run against Congressman Joseph Gavagan in the Twenty-first District. King campaigned extensively, more so than any Negro candidate for Congress had up to that time, and made a direct appeal for a solid black vote. He promised to fight for more federal jobs for Negroes, for an end to discrimination in public utility employment, for a return of the vote to the Negro in the South, for an end to lynching and for an extension of Social Security to agricultural and domestic workers. His candidacy was unanimously endorsed by the Interdenominational Preachers Association, and even Adam Powell, Jr., shook off his antipathy to the Republicans and to Congressman Hamilton Fish, who was campaigning for King, and supported the black candidate.

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[47] _Age_, May 22, 1937, September 18, 1937, September 25, 1937, October 16, 1937, October 30, 1937.

Gavagan, however, was popular in Harlem--he had fought hard for an anti-lynching bill--and the Democrats were well organized. Just a week before the election, the N.A.A.C.P. announced their support of Gavagan, reasoning that he could do more good for Negroes because of his prestige in Congress. Reverend King also lacked support from the regular Republican organization. He pointed out after the election that the Republican Party refused his campaign financial support and the gubernatorial candidate, Thomas E. Dewey, did not even mention his name in speeches. He felt Republicans had used him as a "stalking horse" to get black votes for Dewey. It was not surprising that King was badly defeated, even losing the heavily black Nineteenth and Twenty-first Assembly districts by almost two to one. He remained loyal to the Republican Party, however, and in 1940 was chosen as a delegate to the Republican National Convention.[48]

The Presidential campaign of 1940 caused little excitement or controversy in Harlem. By this time, the work of the minister-politicians was centered on gaining power in the local Democratic organizations and in electing a black man to the City Council. The election of J. Raymond Jones as Democratic district leader of the Nineteenth District and of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., as a city councilman in 1941 put a stamp of at least limited success on a decade that had seen a significant political shift on the part of Harlem's blacks.[49]

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[48] _Ibid._, March 26, 1938, April 2, 1938, July 30, 1938, September 24, 1938, October 15, 1938, October 22, 1938, November 5, 1938, November 12, 1938, November 19, 1938, June 22, 1940; _Amsterdam_, April 23, 1938, April 30, 1938, August 27, 1938, October 1, 1938, October 15, 1938, October 22, 1938, November 12, 1938, January 20, 1940.

During the 1930's, thoughts about war and peace increasingly became the concern of large numbers of American people. For black ministers these issues were not only important but often provided a touchstone for summing up thoughts about American society and the place of the black man in it. In the first place, there had always been in black Christianity a strong strain of pacifism. This was combined in the 1920's and early 1930's with a disillusionment over the achievements of World War I and the hypocrisy of fighting for democracy abroad without practicing it at home. Reverdy Ransom counselled his black brethren to shun the armed services. He wrote in a letter to the *Age* in 1931:

> Let us get out of every branch of the armed service of the United States as quickly and as completely as possible. When we get out let us stay out, and let them have all the battleships, bombing planes, poison gas and all the rest of their weapons of destruction and death. Thus, it is in our power to become the mightiest force for Peace, Justice and Righteousness, not only

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[49] *Age*, June 3, 1939; *Amsterdam*, February 18, 1939, March 4, 1939, March 18, 1939, April 1, 1939, November 15, 1941.

> in our own country but throughout the world.
> I plead that in any future war we absolutely refuse to fight.[50]

Nevertheless, when Italy attacked Ethiopia in 1935, the black community, led by its ministers, condemned the action with virtually one voice. Mass meetings were held to protest the invasion, to demand that the League of Nations take action against Italy, to press for United States aid to Ethiopia and to contribute funds to the Ethiopian defense. The war which was so important to black Americans because of their racial identification with the independent African nation also introduced the specter of fascism as a new aggressive racist ideology that threatened the world. If allowed to succeed in Ethiopia, fascism might continue in its march toward world domination. Thus, increasingly, black leaders began to move away from the earlier isolationism and pacifism. As Adam Powell, Jr., said in his weekly column in the *Amsterdam*:

> This world of ours is too interdependent and interrelated for any one part to feel that it can stand aloof from the problems of the whole. Prejudice is no longer something that crops up in an individual's heart. Today it is a world-wide organized menace, in some nations sanctioned by law. Every time it takes one step further in China, Spain, Germany or Haiti, that one step brings it closer to us so-called free Negroes right here in Harlem.

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[50] *Age*, September 19, 1931; *Amsterdam*, May 28, 1930; Ransom, *The Negro; The Hope or the Despair of Christianity*, unpaged; George Frazier Miller, *To What Extent Censorship?* (Brooklyn, New York, 1936), *passim*.

Powell advocated a boycott of the 1936 Olympic Games by black athletes in opposition to the racist policies pursued by Nazi Germany.[51]

Hitlerism led to a comparison of the situation of the Jews in Germany with that of the Negroes in America and to references to the similarity between Germany and America in terms of oppressive government. "Why is it," Adam Powell asked, "that America with its independence and its blatant proclamations of liberty, freedom and justice, kowtows before the Fascist exponents of oppression? There must be some bond of common purpose between the nations." To some, the events of the late 1930's seemed to be part of an international conspiracy against the darker peoples of the world. To others, fascism was the last gasp of a "rapidly dying Western culture," and Hitler and Mussolini were seen to represent the "last swaggering attempts to preserve a decadent culture."[52]

As Europe again broke into war in 1939 and as the United States moved closer to entering it, a dilemma emerged for American blacks. On the one hand, blacks were steadfastly opposed to fascism; on the other, they were distrustful of a government that talked of the necessity of fighting a "racist ideology" while at the same time practicing racism at home. It sounded too much like fighting "to make the world safe for democracy." Black ministers were, then, slow to support entrance into the war on the side of the British. At least through 1940, Powell, Imes, Johnson, Licorish, Maxwell, Ransom and John H. Robinson opposed entering the war. Further, these ministers were insistent that the drive of the black American toward equality should not lose out because of the war effort. Imes was one of those who helped plan the 1941 March on Washington for jobs in defense industries and integration of the armed forces.[53]

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[51] Age, August 24, 1935, February 1, 1936, April 18, 1936; Amsterdam, September 1, 1934, March 2, 1935, March 9, 1935, July 13, 1935, September 28, 1935, April 18, 1936, April 25, 1936, May 2, 1936, May 9, 1936, August 29, 1936, November 24, 1936, April 10, 1937, June 5, 1937, November 20, 1937, February 19, 1938.

[52] Amsterdam, November 28, 1936, December 5, 1936, March 3, 1937, December 3, 1938.

In time, black America and its ministers came around to support of the war, but it was a support that recognized that blacks were fighting as much for freedom at home as they were for freedom abroad. Ridding the world of the fascist leaders in Europe would help rid this country of its "tinhorn dictators" and "lynchers." "With all its failures," said Reverend John H. Johnson in a 1940 commencement address at Lincoln University, "the democracy we already know in this country is infinitely superior to the alternatives that face us." "The fortunes of our people are tied up with democracy," he continued. "If it fails in England and if it fails in our country our way of life is in a greater plight than it is now." William Lloyd Imes accepted the need for participation in the war against dictatorship, but warned that the blacks had similar opposition within the United States to overcome:

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[53] Age, August 6, 1938, October 26, 1940, November 2, 1940, March 22, 1941, May 19, 1941, May 24, 1941, June 28, 1941; Amsterdam, July 23, 1938, December 24, 1938, March 23, 1940, May 31, 1941.

> Perhaps we must now, since we have created him, fight the tinhorn dictator who has turned large parts of our world into shambles; but one thing the black man must not forget; he must fight for a world in which both black and white will respect each other and dare to live as brothers.... Fear neither the lynchers of the United States, nor the dictators who bestride the world. For as sure as God's justice has any power at all, it will catch up with both lynchers and terrorists and only "the meek (not the weak) shall inherit the earth."[54]

The war effectively brought the era of the Depression to a close for Harlem as well as for America. The 1930's had been a period in which New York's leading black ministers played their traditional role as community leaders in a somewhat different way. More willing to question the goals and ideals of the American society, more willing to press for immediate redress of grievances, more willing to attempt to use directly the power of a unified black mass,

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[54] Age, June 15, 1940, October 5, 1940, June 14, 1941; Amsterdam, March 1, 1941; John Howard Johnson, "Democratic Ideal in a World at War," Harlem, 7; William Lloyd Imes, "The Negro Youth and National Defense," Black Pastures, 95.

Harlem's leading ministers in the 1930's were very much a part of the more radical and militant trend that characterized American society in the years of the Great Depression. The mood of Harlem, as of all America, was remarkably different from that of the 1920's. As a group the leading black clergymen of the 1930's were younger and better educated than their counterparts of the 1920's and before. Born in the twentieth century and raised in a middle-class environment in New York City, the majority of these men were brought up to expect first-class citizenship. Scorning the older philosophy that one had to accept early hardship in return for future success, these men, unlike their fathers, were impatient with a system that ascribed an inferior status to the large majority of black people and implored them to work their way out of that status by themselves. To turn the American vision of equality for all into reality, the leading clergymen of the 1930's much more insistently demanded an end to the economic and political discrimination practiced against blacks.

CONCLUSION

The black pastors who served the leading black churches in New York City between 1900 and 1940 were on the whole able and responsible men who assumed positions of leadership in politics, business and social service and in forming a racial and community consciousness among black New Yorkers. As a group, they were vitally important to their community, presumably more important than any other distinct group in black society.

These leading black pastors perceived their role as Christian ministers in the broadest sense. Their ideal was that of a Christian community with the church as the central institution providing guidance on all aspects of life. No person could escape from damnation unless the community in total were saved and unless all black people were free. Such a situation could only come about if the ministers took an active role in shaping the community life. This traditionally had been the role of the black ministers, at least since emancipation, because the Negro church was the only institution of any size and importance owned and controlled by blacks themselves, and which, thus, was central to all aspects of black community life. In the urban North, black ministers found that what the black community was expected or allowed to do was greatly expanded beyond what was permitted in the rural South. This meant that the ministers found a wider berth in which to play their traditional leadership role.

Though the theology of a large number of these ministers was close to the traditional fundamentalism espoused in the rural community, it was combined with a lively political activism and a contemporary social gospel approach. Unlike so many white fundamentalists who paid little attention to social ills and possible cures, black fundamentalists took the lead in calling attention to the economic and political needs of the masses of poor in the black community and to the need for equality for all black people. Harlem's leading ministers offered an uncommon combination of religious ideologies--a conservative fundamentalist theology along with advanced ideas associated with the institutional church, social gospel and equal rights.

The evident increase in the strength of the black church and in the importance of the black minister in New York City during the first 40 years of the twentieth century runs counter to the pattern of decline which characterized the relative importance of the church in the twentieth century as industrialization and urbanization increased. This resulted in part from the extremely restrictive bounds put on the black community in New York City by the larger white society. Because blacks had great difficulty in finding living space outside the black community, because blacks were not welcomed into important positions in the larger society, because blacks were restricted from freely using almost all institutions and services of the society, the community was forced to be more cohesive and its own institutions were forced to be more powerful within the community. Thus, though there was, as in any society that partially equates social status with economic position, a class split in the black community, the restricted nature of the community helped to close the split. Since the elite could find little status or power in the larger society, they more often remained as leaders of the black community. It would seem that the most successful and the most powerful of New York's black ministers--A. Clayton Powell, Reverdy Ransom, William Lloyd Imes, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., John H. Johnson--were those who were best able to bridge the gap between the mass and the elite. A continuing and important theme of their social message was the necessity of accepting the basic unity of the black community in New York and in the United States and acting upon the strength inherent in that unity.

The political and economic views of these black leaders were remarkably similar to those of the larger society, except for the fact that they related these views to the needs of their own race. Leading black ministers had an almost unshakable faith in the justness and ultimate goodness of the American system. They believed strongly that given a fair chance, the Negro would achieve success in America. Until the 1930's, they did not suggest changes in the basic American system nor did they request special help for the black man, only an equal chance to vote, to work, to live, to be educated. Most of the leading ministers prior to the 1930's had risen to their positions of prominence within this system. Most came from the South or border states and were raised in rural circumstances. Most had parents who had experienced slavery. Their early education was often spotty and largely self-acquired, and higher education was usually received at one of the small Southern black divinity schools. Their lives were in many ways black versions of the Horatio Alger story.

As leaders, these men sharpened and made eloquent the quest of the black masses for dignity and equality, but at the same time their attitude moderated and perhaps dulled the rebelliousness of the dispossessed. Even in the 1930's, when the degree of militancy and radicalism was clearly heightened, the effect of the minister-leaders was to control the militancy and lead it toward moderated and achievable goals. The great mass of dispossessed and disoriented blacks in New York City were liable to be led in a number of directions--toward complete capitulation to the urban temptations of alcohol, gambling and vice; toward a withdrawal into the religious emotionalism of the cults and the storefronts; toward the social and economic revolution of a Marcus Garvey or Sufi Abdul Hamid; or toward the social reform goals expressed by the leading ministers. It is to the credit of these ministers that a significant proportion of this mass in New York followed the last of these paths.

Though this group of ministers was active in all aspects of black life in New York City, their role stands out, especially, as leaders in the areas of business, politics, civil rights and social service. They advocated, invested in and helped manage black-owned businesses. The gospel of black capitalism was a familiar theme of their sermons. Black ministers were asserting in 1900 as they were in 1940 that each business owned and operated by blacks meant a long stride toward racial equality and freedom. Ministers were leading backers in a number of real estate companies, almost the only type of black-owned business that achieved appreciable financial importance in New York City. Some of the churches themselves even became landlords, hoping to combine profitable investment with social idealism.

Just as they preached race salvation through owning businesses, these ministers also suggested that such salvation might come through politics. Thus, leading ministers played an important political role, endorsing and working for candidates who expressed a position beneficial to the race, running as candidates themselves and preaching the importance of political awareness. Although it was the rare minister who was not a Republican in the years before 1930, they viewed partisan politics with a good deal more objectivity than professional politicians and exerted a strong force toward political independence and toward weighing political contests in terms of which contestant could do the most for the race. The fact of the black man's second-class status in America made the issue of race paramount in the minds of the black preachers.

These ministers of the well-established churches played a leading role, as well,in the protest groups exerting pressure for increased civil rights for the Negro both in New York City and nationally. From the Citizens' Protective League in 1900 to the March on Washington in 1941, New York's leading black pastors were in the forefront of all the important protest movements organized during this 40-year span. These ministers played a part in the formation of the N.A.A.C.P. and from 1911 to 1940 served frequently on the national Board of Directors and as officers of the New York City branch. It would be wrong to conclude that these leading ministers constantly urged and led militant protests on behalf of black freedom and equality. The number of such protests was small considering the provocation. But, on the other hand, these leading ministers in New York did not by any means counsel a never-ending patience and forbearance in the face of white oppression and racism.

These ministers were the natural leaders of the various community service and welfare organizations that were a familiar part of New York life. Playing a role in a wide spectrum of organizations from those providing aid for newly arrived migrants to those that sent young people to summer camp, New York's leading black ministers were vitally important in practically every social service organization, public or private, that at all touched on the life of the black man in New York City. Just as with the N.A.A.C.P., leading ministers were among those who helped form the National Urban League and were usually represented on the Board of Directors of the New York Urban League. The most significant social services were the activities of the churches themselves. The large established churches in the black community were round-the-clock institutions with clubs and activities that appealed to myriad interests and served a great number of needs in the community.

A significant number of black ministers thus exerted a leadership role through different institutions and in a variety of ways. The fact that they were important leaders cannot be seriously disputed, but one can question just how successful this leadership was. Given the realities of Harlem life in 1940, it would be difficult to argue that the black community had made particularly rapid strides since 1900. A large part of the explanation for this relative failure cannot be attributed to the black community or to its leaders. In the best of circumstances black people in America met with unequal treatment; in the worst they have suffered outright oppression. Added to this were the difficulties of forming a community on a base of impoverished rural migrants whose numbers were rapidly expanding and who lacked the training to facilitate an adjustment to urban life. The New York black community grew very rapidly from 1900 to 1940, too rapidly to permit the social institutions that served that community to be adapted to the new needs and problems. Indeed, the rapid growth and the instability and transiency of the black community were significant factors in explaining its difficulties. Responding to the increased migration in the period of the First World War by moving to Harlem, the community had at best only 15 relatively good years before being rocked by the Depression of the 1930's. The community which only had begun to establish itself was not prepared for the difficulties of the Depression and was thus affected even more seriously by the economic decline.

But explanations of the limited success lie within the community as well. No matter how much the churches moderated the split and how much the ministers tried to bridge the gap, the fact that there was a real split between the black elite and the black masses was obvious, and this weakened the community. Despite the growth of these established churches, large numbers of black people, mostly the poorest and the most recent migrants, were either unchurched or members of storefronts and cults. The drag on the entire community by this growing number of disorganized and disoriented human beings was immense. In not bringing them into the protective fold of an established church, thus affording them a better chance of integrating into the community, the leading ministers partly failed in one of their most important tasks.

These ministers, as well, failed to come up with any really new solutions to the problems of the black community. Though not reluctant to denounce injustice, they maintained a great faith in the American system, especially in petty capitalism, and only rarely did they suggest fundamental changes. The prevailing middle-class ideology, however, worked better for individual improvement and success than it did for advancement for all blacks. The social realities of Harlem were such that there was a desperate need for a program designed to improve the lot of the masses. The leading clergymen were moderates who were interested in ameliorating rather than revolutionizing the society. Certainly, part of the reason these ministers were not respected by black intellectuals or black radicals before the 1930's was that so many of their solutions fell so far short of what needed to be done. Perhaps the problem was that the state of the black man in America was so serious that it was beyond the cure of ameliorists, especially so when the ameliorists received so little help from the larger white society which should have been interested in moderate reform.

Further, the ministers often resorted to rhetoric rather than to action built upon solid organization to achieve their goals, so that much of the amelioration they spoke for never came to fruition. Preaching a sermon on the Christian duty to vote for a black candidate for Congress was a much more common act than was assembling a grass roots organization to assure a victory for that candidate. Similarly, though the institutional approach of the black churches brought improvement for a segment of the black community, as did the white institutional church for the whites, the black institutional church may be called a failure in Harlem just as it was in the rest of urban America. In Harlem the churches that were well organized for social activities were often poorly organized and financed for promotion of the kind of welfare and community improvement activities needed to attack the basic social problems of the community. It is true that the institutional church provided necessary services; but that they provided the structure and the force for permanent reform is not so easily demonstrated.

Harlem was far from a stable, well organized, healthy community in 1940; and because its ministers were its most prominent group of leaders, they must share the blame. But this general conclusion should not overshadow those findings of the study which show that these clergymen made a number of positive contributions to New York's black community throughout this 40-year period. On the whole, the black community of New York City from 1900 to 1940 would have been much worse off without its leading clergymen.

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